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A Revised Edition

**Gentle Path
through
the
Twelve
Steps**

**The Classic
Guide for
All People in
the Process
of Recovery**

Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.

Introduction to the Second Edition

A recent experience I had in Michigan led me to reflect on the main theme of this book in a new way. I had been invited to speak at a workshop on the Twelve Steps and recovery. My host offered a generous introduction and concluded her remarks by noting that I was the author of *The "Brutal" Path*. We all laughed because it was a genuinely funny moment. It underscored the paradoxical truth that pain and hard work are inevitable on the path to serenity.

This humorous incident, once again, stirred me to ask myself, Why is recovery so hard? One major reason is that recovery is about reclaiming integrity and doing things we initially would rather not. The rewards are not so visible when we begin each new leg of our journey. That's why it's so important to be kind to ourselves along the way. As I thought about the question, I recalled the many therapists who have been genuinely helpful in my life. What they all had in common was a capacity for kindness, compassion, and nurturing coupled with a high degree of personal accountability. They encouraged me not to be so harsh with myself, to view myself with compassion. The tasks of recovery became easier as I listened to their voices.

From my own work as a therapist, I know how hard it is for people to be patient and kind to themselves. One young physician came to our treatment program and used every spare moment of the first three days to completely fill out all the exercises in *The Gentle Path*. His hope was to get done faster. He learned, as we all do, that the process has its own time. Acceptance and surrender are how we become open to healing. I know a group that used *The Gentle Path* for eleven months and only got to the Fourth Step. They were a bit obsessive, perhaps, but they took time for the process. This book aims to help you ease your way through a difficult journey. It does not have to be done fast or perfectly.

In the first edition of *The Gentle Path* we invited readers to send us their reactions to the book and any thoughts on how it might be improved.

My vision was that the book would evolve and grow, becoming even more useful over time with the help of its users. The response from around the country has been one of the most gratifying experiences I have had as an author. People have been generous and creative in helping us with this edition.

Thanks to your insightful contributions, we have modified exercises, added new ones, and injected new information. A group guide has been provided as an appendix. We hope you will continue to send us your reactions to this second edition of *The Gentle Path*.

For those who wish to work on some issues more intensively, we have created separate booklets that focus on a particular Step or combination of Steps. We did this for several reasons. Some exercises, such as recording the Personal Crazyness Index (PCI), people wanted to do more than once. The second edition provides more writing room, as readers requested, and additional exercises that were extremely helpful but would not fit in the book. We also include a series of meditations and affirmations to support those having a hard time with certain Steps. Most will find that the book is what they want to use. But some may also want to concentrate on a specific Step. The pamphlets will maximize the flexibility of *The Gentle Path* materials for your use. We hope you like what we have done.

No author's work truly stands alone. Many have contributed their insights and expertise to the making of this book. Because of their vital contributions, I especially wish to acknowledge Steven and Toby, Wes and Joanna and The Meadows, Rev. Carolyn Schmidt, Susan F., Gary T., Suzan W., Charlene C., Sheila K., Bobby L., Betty R., Bryan S., Debbie F., and Andrea's Jericho Therapeutic Community.

My thanks also to Ann Marcaccini for her editorial help, Becky Thorvig for keeping things going as we worked on this project, Michael Alvarez and the staff at Del Amo Hospital for their support, and Margaret Marsh and Mark Habrel at CompCare Publishers for believing in the vision.

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Introduction to the First Edition

This workbook and the accompanying tape set were designed to help people with different types of addictions, including alcoholics, gamblers, compulsive overeaters, and sex addicts, as well as their coaddicted loved ones. Many books exist to help recovering people through the Twelve Steps; some of them even address multiple addictions. This workbook, however, provides a unique set of structured forms and exercises to help you as a recovering person integrate the Twelve Steps into your life.

Gentleness becomes the theme for both the workbook and the audiotape workshop. Addiction by definition possesses a driven quality. Some recovering people try to work the Twelve Steps in the same compulsive manner with which they approached their lives. The spirit of the Twelve Steps is gentleness. The path is a gentle way. Like water wearing down hard rock, consistency and time become allies in creating new channels for one's life.

I hope that the workbook becomes for you a living document that records the basic elements of your story and your recovery. A workbook well used will be filled out completely, frayed at the edges, and have margins crowded with notes. Then, like the Velveteen Rabbit that came alive with use, your "living document" can bring vitality to your program. It can be a way for you to think through issues as you share them with your Twelve Step group, sponsor, therapist, therapy group, or significant others.

Anonymity or confidentiality prevents me from identifying the many people whose suggestions have improved this book of "forms." I am deeply grateful to all of you.

—P.J.C.

Some Words About Working the Program

Although new members of Twelve Step programs often hear about “working the program,” just what that means is often unclear. Each fellowship has its own definition. A bulimic, worried about bingeing, gets one response; an alcoholic, who wants a drink, gets a different one. Even in the same kind of fellowship (such as AA or OA), groups vary according to members’ ages, experience, and backgrounds. But some common elements exist that transcend the various fellowships.

Going to Twelve Step meetings is the basic building-block of recovery. Any meeting will help. Usually, a recovering person tries to attend one or two meetings a week, every week. Becoming involved with the life of those meetings provides a solid foundation for recovery. Making a Step presentation in the meetings or taking on a group leadership position, such as treasurer or group representative, are good ways for new members to become involved in the process. The time will come when any meeting will restore the serenity that goes with belonging to the fellowship, but for beginners, as well as experienced members, having a primary group or two anchors them in a program.

Much of working a program, however, goes on outside a meeting. Most recovering people learn about the program from applying program principles to their real-life problems. Members of the group become consultants and teachers as a new member talks about the challenges of early recovery. Those relationships often last a long time. And even if they change, a recovering person learns how to get help from several sources and not to face things alone. Twelve Step fellowships assist people with dependency problems in getting support and effective problem-solving.

Most groups also have a social life outside the meetings. Before or after meetings, people meet for coffee or food. Sometimes favorite restaurants become gathering spots. Some groups have regular breakfasts or lunches where people gather as sort of a “second” group meeting for

extra support. Some groups have retreats together to intensify work on the program. While these are not part of the meeting, they are essential to program life. To regard them as an option for which one does not have time is to miss out on an important part of developing a program for oneself: building a support network.

One major obstacle you may need to overcome as a new member is a reluctance to use the telephone. To feel comfortable only when talking about serious issues face to face limits your ability to use your consultants. Addicted people are not good at asking for help in general, and they will resist using the phone even at the most critical times. Thus, they stay in their isolation. Using the phone can become a habit. At first it serves as a crisis hotline. As recovery progresses, it becomes a tool for maintaining and deepening intimacy. Some program veterans hold on to their phone phobias and still put together successful recoveries. They are rare, however. Many groups urge newcomers to get a phone list and make “practice” calls from the start.

A key figure in developing a program is your sponsor. The Twelve Steps in many ways are a demanding discipline. At whatever stage of recovery, early as well as advanced, new challenges emerge constantly in applying the Steps. Recovering people select a sponsor (sometimes two) to serve as a principal guide and witness. In early recovery, contact with a sponsor is often daily—and at times hourly. The sponsor does not have to be much more “expert” than you. Your sponsor is simply someone who

- Agrees to be your sponsor
- Knows your whole story
- Can hold you accountable for how you work your program
- Keeps the focus on how the Steps apply to your life
- Can be honest with you
- Will support you

Sometimes sponsorship evolves into friendship, but the sponsor's chief goal is to help you understand your story. Sponsors also enhance their recoveries by helping you.

Twelve Step fellowships exist to help people stop self-destructive behavior over which they are powerless. Central to stopping the behavior is defining sobriety. Sometimes that is difficult to do. What is a slip for a codependent or a compulsive eater? Does sobriety mean just abstinence for the alcoholic, or is other behavior to be avoided as well? Most recovering people find that their understanding of “sobriety” evolves over time—and that it goes beyond just stopping self-destructive behavior. It also means embracing new behaviors. Later in this workbook you will have a chance to examine your definition of sobriety. At the outset, however, you will need to talk with your sponsor and your group about what you will not do. You may be powerless over your addiction, but you are responsible for your recovery.

Many people find initiating a recovery program extremely difficult. In earlier times, the only solution when things got rough was to attend more meetings. Fortunately, professional therapists and treatment facilities now support the recovery process for the many forms of addictive illness. They have become extended partners to the fellowship. When you feel discouraged, read the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous—the original fellowship—especially Chapters Five and Six. Composed in the days when professional support was unavailable and even hostile to Twelve Step groups, it serves as inspiration to all who wish to transform their lives.

The Twelve Steps form a process that promotes two qualities in its membership: honesty and spirituality. Starting with the first admission of powerlessness, the Steps demand a high level of accountability to oneself and others. Only one way exists to maintain that level of integrity: a committed spirituality. The fellowship becomes a community that supports this process. The program, however, is not abstract, but very concrete. You “work” your program whenever you

- Make a call for support
- Do a daily meditation of the program
- Admit your powerlessness
- Are honest about your mistakes and shortcomings
- Have a spiritual awareness
- Support another program person

- Actively work on a Step
- Work for balance in your life
- Focus on today
- Take responsibility for your choices, feelings, and actions
- Do something to mend harm you caused
- Attend a meeting
- Give a meeting
- Maintain a defined sobriety

Addicts and coaddicts live in the extremes. No middle ground exists. You, as an addict, are like a light switch that is either totally on or totally off. Life, however, requires a rheostat, a switch mechanism in which there are various degrees of middle ground. Mental health involves a disciplined balance that relies on self-limits and boundaries. Nowhere is that more evident than in the two core issues that all addicts (including coaddicts) face: intimacy and dependency.

The most obvious extreme is dependency on a mood-altering drug or experience (like sex, gambling, or eating) to cope with life. The chemical or experience becomes the trusted source of nurturing or a way to avoid pain or anxiety. All else is sacrificed or compromised. Workaholism, compulsive spending, high-risk experiences (skydiving or racing) simply fill out the range of options to lose oneself.

In the grip of addiction or obsessive behavior, life becomes chaotic and crisis-filled. Addicts and coaddicts live in excess and on the edge. Because they do not complete things, they have much unfinished business. They lack boundaries, so they often do not use good judgment. Others see them as irresponsible and lacking in common sense.

The opposite excessive extreme is grounded in overcontrol. Sexual obsession, for example, can be expressed as either sexual addiction or compulsive abstinence. Many adult children of alcoholics who become compulsive nondrinkers are as obsessed with alcohol as their alcoholic parent(s). An anorexic and a compulsive overeater are both obsessed with food. Overcontrol may be reflected in behaviors such as compulsive dieting and saving, extreme religiosity, phobic responses, panic attacks, and procrastination.

For those with a strong need to control people, events, or their emotions, life becomes rigid, empty, and sterile. Risks are to be avoided at all costs. The fear of beginning new projects or experimenting with new behaviors is sustained by harsh judgmental attitudes and perfectionism. Living in deprivation may seem better than being out of control. But it is still an obsessive lifestyle that leads to loss of self. Recovering people can fall into a real trap if they switch from one extreme to the other and believe that the shift equals true change.

Out of Control	Overcontrol
Alcoholism	Compulsive nondrinking
Sex addiction	Compulsive nonsexuality
Compulsive eating	Anorexia
Compulsive gambling	Extreme religiosity
High-risk experiences	Phobic responses
Workaholism	Procrastination
Compulsive spending	Compulsive saving
Life Becomes	Life Becomes
Chaotic	Rigid
Living on the edge	Risk avoidant
Crisis-filled	Empty
Unfinished	Fear of beginning
No common sense	Judgmental
Irresponsible	Perfection
Excess	Deprivation

When some of these obsessive behaviors mix, life becomes even more complex. Consider this couple: He is a sex addict and an alcoholic, and she is a compulsive overeater. She attempts to control his addiction

by throwing out his *Playboys* and his booze. He monitors her eating and criticizes her weight. They are both codependent. Each is obsessed with what the other is doing, each believing that he or she has the power to change the other. As his sex addiction becomes more out of control (although he believes he can control it), she becomes more nonsexual, acting as if she has the power to balance the equation. Even her excessive weight becomes a way for her to exert power by making her sexually unattractive. The reality is they are both powerless in some ways they have not acknowledged.

Variations on this theme plague couples and families in which addiction thrives. A person can even live in simultaneous internal extremes. For example, think of the bulimic who both binges (overeats) and purges (vomits). Only one way exists for people to fight living in such addictive extremes: to admit to the reality of their powerlessness.

To accomplish that task, another issue needs to be faced: intimacy. Addicts and coaddicts seek closeness, nurturing, and love. In many ways addiction derives its compelling force because of a failure of intimacy. Addictive (again including coaddictive) obsession replaces human bonding and caring.

With no emotional rheostat, you can live an isolated, lonely existence in which you build walls around yourself, deny your own needs, and share nothing of yourself. Or, you flip to an emotionally enmeshed existence in which you are so overinvolved you feel trapped and smothered. You concentrate on meeting the needs of another person and take responsibility for that person's behavior. No boundaries exist and consequently no privacy exists. Again, a pattern of living in the extremes emerges.

Isolated	Enmeshed
Denial of needs	Needs of others are priority
Lonely	Smothered
No sharing	No privacy
Alienated from others	Responsible for others
Extreme boundaries	No boundaries

Add out of control with isolated—that's one extreme and you get off center; add overcontrol with enmeshed and you get off center in another way.

Addiction/Coaddiction

Extreme Living

Out of Control
Isolated



Overcontrolled
Enmeshed



Recovery

Centered Living

Balance, Focus, Responsibility for Self



The Twelve Steps offer you a path out of extreme living. Three themes remain constant throughout the Twelve Step process: balance, focus, and responsibility for self.

Balance: to avoid either-or extremes

Focus: to live in the present—a day at a time—not in the future or the past

Responsibility for self: to live within your own human limits

With these three themes as a basis for living your life, recovery becomes possible.

My Recovery Themes

Balance

Focus

Responsibility for self

Before thoroughly pursuing your path, you need to secure guides to support you and help you find your way. Usually this starts with your sponsor. A sponsor is a person who works with you to help you understand the program you undertake. Other members of your Twelve Step group, or, if you are in therapy, your therapist, can also serve as guides. Record on the next page who your guides will be.

This workbook concludes with a set of suggested readings. The workbook also provides a format to supplement your guides, your reading, and if you have the companion tapes, your listening. A thoughtful approach on your part will enhance the workbook. Your guides will also make suggestions, especially about reading material appropriate to your program.

👤 My Guides Will Be 👤

Sponsor

Others



Step One



We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—
that our lives had become unmanageable.

In every culture of the world, human beings have created myths and legends to give their lives meaning and to describe the significant events and relationships that shape their experiences. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell traced the origin of humanity's most universal story: the hero's journey. After studying the literature of civilizations past and present, Campbell concluded that these myths expressed important truths about the human condition. The struggles to break free from rigid, soul-stifling rules, develop a relationship with God, and express one's unique identity are universal.

The archetypes described in these myths also surface in dreams. According to Carl Jung, these archetypes represent different aspects of the human mind; our personalities divide themselves into a variety of characters who play out the inner dramas of our lives. That is why we feel a sense of recognition and identification with them. To be healthy, we need to understand the lessons they can teach us about ourselves.

One of the most important archetypes is that of the hero who overcomes adversity and becomes transformed as a result. Heroes discover, in their limitations, dramatic and unforeseen strengths. All of us have a hero within. Recovering people who have been in recovery for some time almost always marvel at the expanded awareness and renewed capabilities their suffering has brought. They have walked the ancient path of the hero.

In every sense, you are beginning the hero's journey. Most heroes, whether it be Luke Skywalker, Bilbo Baggins, or Hamlet, begin reluctantly. Forces beyond their control propel them past the busyness of their lives and into personal change and renewal. In *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*, Luke Skywalker is on a quest to destroy Darth Vader's evil empire. But Yoda, a wise teacher and spiritual guide, tells Luke of a more important struggle within. A major part of Luke's battle for peace and justice

involves confronting his own shadow or dark side. "You will face only what you bring with you," Yoda says. Luke's first teacher, Obe Wan Kanobe, gave another warning: "Things are not what they seem. Your eyes can deceive you. Don't trust them. Reach out with your feelings."

If you are like most addicts, you are unaware of parts of yourself, including your feelings. Without that self-knowledge, you misperceive your own reality. The First Step is designed to give you what you need to know for your journey.

The First Step requires an admission of powerlessness over living in the extremes. As part of this Step, you assemble evidence to document both powerlessness and unmanageability in your life. This is the beginning of understanding the story of your illness. Clearly specifying the history becomes essential to the unfolding of the story. The following exercises will help you in documenting your history.

Affirmations — Addicts and coaddicts have been negatively programmed. The experience of their illness only confirmed the damaging messages from their childhood. A list of affirmations is provided to help you reprogram. Use them daily and as you need them.

Consequences Inventory — You may have grown so used to life as an addict, or life with an addict, that what is normal becomes obscure. The Consequences Inventory helps to identify behaviors, attitudes, feelings, and results that indicate that life is unmanageable.

Family Tree and Addiction — Most addicts have other addicts and coaddicts in their families. By thinking through your family tree, some patterns may emerge that will show how some part of your powerlessness started within your family.

Addiction History — Addicts and coaddicts frequently have other addictions that affect their powerlessness. One example is that of the addict whose alcoholic behavior increases his sexual acting out. Another example is the codependent whose excessive weight gain from compulsive overeating increases feelings of unworthiness.

Abuse Checklist — Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse are common in addictive families. Children are powerless over the abuse they receive from the adults in their lives. The abuse damaged them in fundamental ways that serve as catalysts to their becoming addicted and coaddicted.

Step One for Addicts — Once you have documented your history in the above exercises, you'll be ready to start working and reflecting on your First Step. You'll begin to carefully document the powerlessness and unmanageability in your own life.

Step One for Coaddicts — You'll specify the type of addiction to which you are coaddicted and document your powerlessness and unmanageability.

Note for all addicts: A high probability exists that you are coaddicted as well. At some point you may wish to return and do a First Step on your coaddiction.

Sharing Your First Step — Part of taking the First Step is sharing what you've learned about your story with your guides and others in the program. Remember, the answers may not come easily as you complete the exercise. When you feel stuck, get your guides to help you!

Affirmations

One cost of addiction is loss of faith in abilities. We can learn to reprogram ourselves with positive, healthy messages.

A list of suggested affirmations follows. Each affirmation is written in the present—as if you are already accomplishing it. It may not be a reality for you today. You need to “act as if.” It may be difficult, but think of it as planting a garden with possibilities that will blossom into wonderful realities.

Select from the list the affirmations that have meaning for you. Add some of your own. Tape the list of affirmations on your mirror and repeat them while you are shaving or putting on your makeup. Keep a copy in the car to repeat while commuting, or record these comforting words on a tape and listen to them before you go to bed.

- ☛ Today I accept that the life I have known is over.
- ☛ I am entering a new and blessed phase of my time here.
- ☛ I accept pain as my teacher and problems as the key to a new existence for me.

- ☛ I seek guides in my life and understand that they may be different than I anticipate.
- ☛ I accept the messages surrounding me. Negativity is replaced with positive acceptance.
- ☛ I realize that I have had a hard life and that I deserve better.
- ☛ I let the Spirit melt the hardness of my heart.
- ☛ I comfort and nurture myself. As part of the surrender of my pride I will let others give to me as an act of faith in my value as a person.
- ☛ I accept my illness as part of the trauma of this culture and my family.
- ☛ I appreciate that in the chaos of the now, my instinct and beliefs may work against me. My recovering friends help me sort out healthy instincts and beliefs from unhealthy ones.
- ☛ Time is transforming my loneliness into solitude, my suffering into meaning, and relationships into intimacy.
- ☛ I do not blame or search for fault. It is not who, but how, and what happened.
- ☛ I commit to reality at all costs knowing that is where I will find ultimate serenity.
- ☛ I accept that life is difficult and that leaning into the struggle adds to my balance.

Create affirmations that are meaningful to you:



Consequences Inventory

The movie *Mask* is about a boy whose face is grossly disfigured from an illness. The story deals with the prejudice of other people and what others learn from the boy's courage. In one scene, the boy and his mother go into a typical carnival fun house and look into the distorted mirrors. Instead of reflecting his grossly misshapen face, the warped mirror reveals the image of a normal boy. He calls his mother over and they stare at what he would look like without his disease.

Addiction is like living in a fun house. The insanity and unmanageability of addiction and codependency look normal to those who can see themselves only through the distorted lens of dysfunctional behavior and its consequences. The warped mirrors of the addict or coaddict make the bizarre look normal. The following exercises are designed to break the mirrors that distort our reality.

Check each of the following that you have experienced:

Emotional Consequences

- ☐ 1. Attempted suicide
- ☐ 2. Suicidal thoughts or feelings
- ☐ 3. Homicidal thoughts or feelings
- ☐ 4. Feelings of extreme hopelessness or despair
- ☐ 5. Failed efforts to control the addiction or the addict
- ☐ 6. Feeling like two people—living a public and a secret life
- ☐ 7. Emotional instability (depression, paranoia, fear of going insane)
- ☐ 8. Loss of touch with reality
- ☐ 9. Loss of self-esteem

- ☐ 10. Loss of life goals
- ☐ 11. Acting against your own values and beliefs
- ☐ 12. Strong feelings of guilt and shame
- ☐ 13. Strong feelings of isolation and loneliness
- ☐ 14. Strong fears about your future
- ☐ 15. Emotional exhaustion
- ☐ 16. Other emotional consequences; specify:

Physical Consequences

- ☐ 1. Continuation of addictive behavior despite the risk to your health
- ☐ 2. Extreme weight loss or gain
- ☐ 3. Physical problems (e.g., ulcers, high blood pressure)
- ☐ 4. Physical injury or abuse by others
- ☐ 5. Involvement in potentially abusive or dangerous situations
- ☐ 6. Vehicle accidents (e.g., automobile, motorcycle, bicycle)
- ☐ 7. Self-abuse or injury (e.g., cutting, burning, bruising)
- ☐ 8. Sleep disturbances (e.g., not enough sleep, too much sleep)
- ☐ 9. Physical exhaustion

- ☐ 10. Other physical consequences, specific to your addiction or codependency (e.g., blackouts, venereal disease, AIDS, bleeding from the throat or nose, vulnerability to disease)

Spiritual Consequences

- ☐ 1. Strong feelings of spiritual emptiness
- ☐ 2. Feeling disconnected from yourself and the world
- ☐ 3. Feeling abandoned by God or Higher Power
- ☐ 4. Anger at your Higher Power or God
- ☐ 5. Loss of faith in anything spiritual
- ☐ 6. Other spiritual consequences; specify:

Family and Partnership Consequences

- ☐ 1. Risking the loss of partner or spouse
- ☐ 2. Loss of partner or spouse
- ☐ 3. Increase in marital or relationship problems
- ☐ 4. Jeopardizing the well-being of your family
- ☐ 5. Loss of your family's or partner's respect

- ☐ 6. Increase in problems with your children
- ☐ 7. Loss of your family of origin
- ☐ 8. Other family or partnership consequences; specify:

Career and Educational Consequences

- ☐ 1. Decrease in productivity at work
- ☐ 2. Demotion at work
- ☐ 3. Loss of co-workers' respect
- ☐ 4. Loss of the opportunity to work in the career of your choice
- ☐ 5. Failing grades in school
- ☐ 6. Loss of educational opportunities
- ☐ 7. Loss of business
- ☐ 8. Forced to change careers
- ☐ 9. Not working to capability (underemployed)
- ☐ 10. Termination from job
- ☐ 11. Other career or educational consequences; specify:

Other Consequences

- ☐ 1. Loss of important friendships
- ☐ 2. Loss of interest in hobbies or activities
- ☐ 3. Few friends who don't participate in your addiction or your partner's addiction
- ☐ 4. Financial problems
- ☐ 5. Illegal activities (arrests or near-arrests)
- ☐ 6. Court or legal involvement
- ☐ 7. Lawsuits
- ☐ 8. Prison or workhouse
- ☐ 9. Stealing or embezzling to support behavior
- ☐ 10. Other consequences; specify:



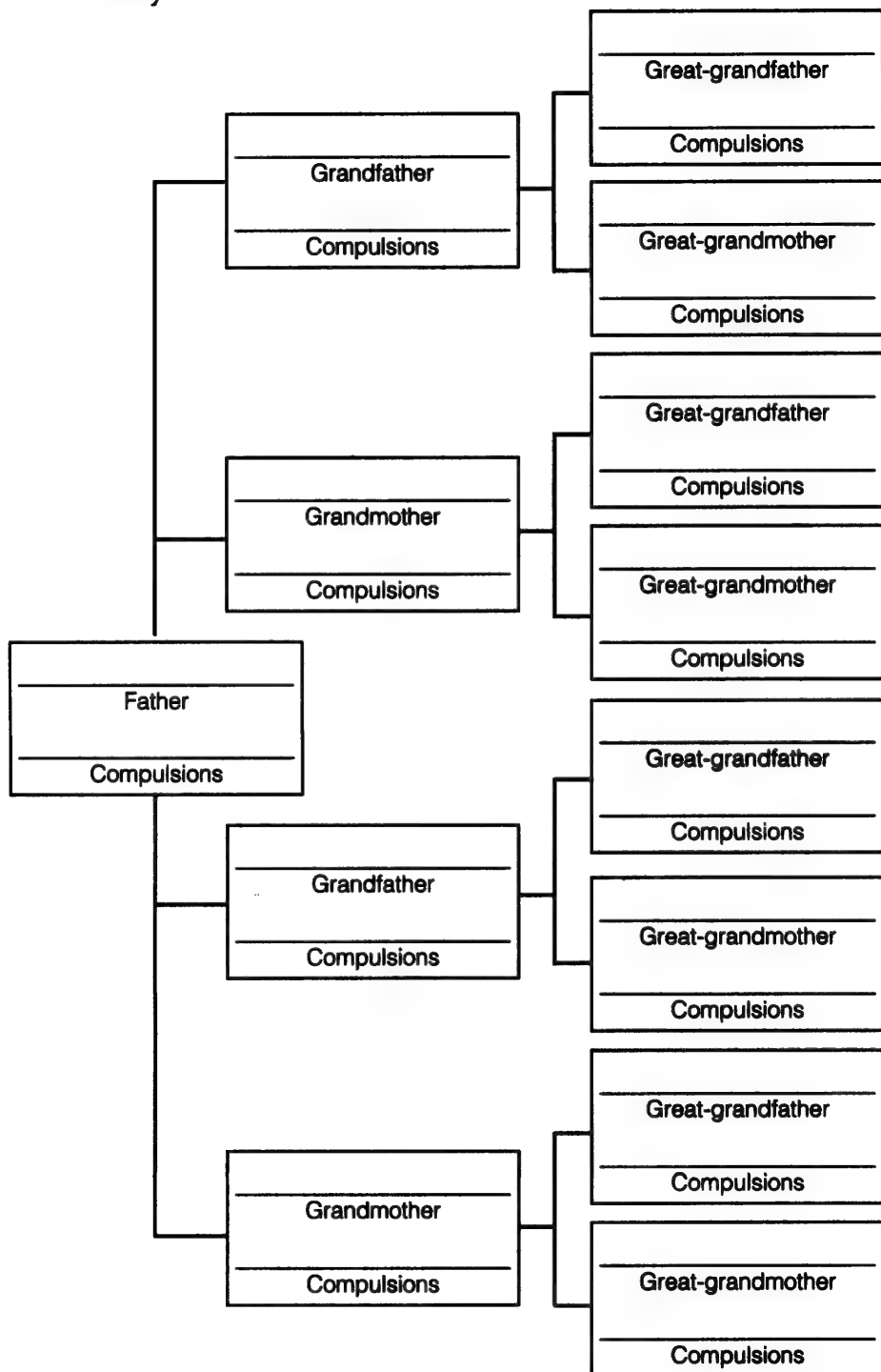
Family Tree and Addiction

Most addicts and coaddicts come from families in which addiction or compulsive behavior was present. We learned to cope with addictive or codependent behavior by denying our feelings, wants, and needs. To help understand your powerlessness over the sources of your shame, diagram your family of origin back three generations. After entering each person's name, record any compulsive or addictive characteristics on the line below the person's name. If you are unsure, but you have a good guess about a person, simply write in the information and circle it.

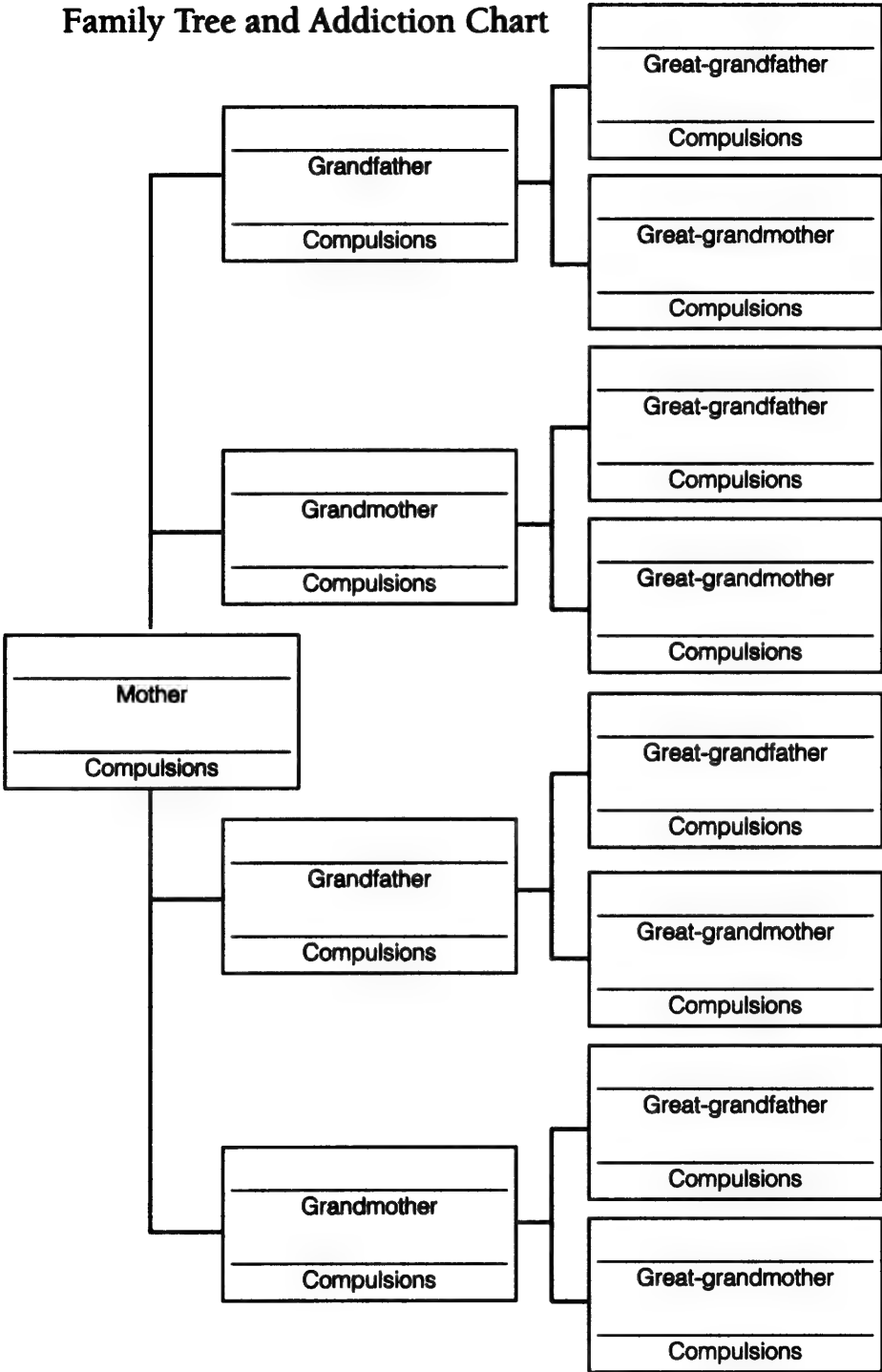
Compulsive or Addictive Characteristics

1. alcoholic
2. compulsive gambler
3. anorexic/bulimic
4. compulsive overeater
5. sex addict
6. victim of child abuse
7. perpetrator of child abuse
8. mental health problem
9. other compulsive or addictive behavior such as overeating, working, spending, or extreme religiosity (please label)
10. coaddict

Family Tree and Addiction Chart



Family Tree and Addiction Chart



Now list any other relatives (brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, or cousins) who fit one of the ten categories.

Example: Fred Smith, uncle, alcoholic, sex addict.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Are there patterns of addiction in your family? Given the role of addiction in your family, what reflections do you now have about your own powerlessness? Can you see ways in which your addictive behavior was learned, or ways in which your behavior was a form of coping with an unhealthy family environment?

Record your reflections here:

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Addiction History

Addictions and obsessions migrate. Witness the alcoholic who gets sober and then starts acting out sexually. His sexual behavior, which was already out of control, escalates dramatically to fill the obsessive void created when he stopped drinking. Our addictions and obsessions can also support one another. The compulsive gambler/sex addict who goes to Las Vegas for a multiple binge is a good example. Because addictions are “cunning and baffling,” the type of addiction may shift from one extreme to another; for example, the compulsive overeater may become anorexic. Addictions and compulsions may become part of the family system. Consider the alcoholic whose codependent obsession with his wife’s compulsive eating is an excuse for him to drink.

As part of the First Step, it helps to chronicle how various addictions or self-abusive behaviors have affected one another. Review the following categories of addictive or “unstoppable” behaviors. Simply write examples of how other out-of-control behaviors affected the development of your addiction or coaddiction during each age category. The notes can be short and descriptive.

Example: Compulsively masturbating at age 6 in order to sleep—was worse when Dad was drunk and violent—using sex to deal with my codependent fear.

Another example: My weight was heaviest at 29 when I was trying to control my spouse’s addiction.

Behavior	Age 0–10	Age 11–18	Age 19–25	Age 26–40	Age 41+
Eating					

Behavior	Age 0–10	Age 11–18	Age 19–25	Age 26–40	Age 41+
Alcohol					

Behavior	Age 0–10	Age 11–18	Age 19–25	Age 26–40	Age 41+
Sexuality					

Behavior	Age 0–10	Age 11–18	Age 19–25	Age 26–40	Age 41+
Gambling					

Behavior	Age 0–10	Age 11–18	Age 19–25	Age 26–40	Age 41+
Coaddition					

Behavior	Age 0–10	Age 11–18	Age 19–25	Age 26–40	Age 41+
Other examples of compulsive behavior (give label—for example, shoplifting, spending, smoking, working, dangerous or high-risk behaviors)					

[illegible]

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Abuse Checklist

Addiction studies show a high correlation between childhood emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and subsequent addiction. The following checklist and worksheet will help you assess the extent to which you were abused in your own childhood. To cope with your own abuse, you may have minimized the impact the abuse had on your life. Now is the time to recognize the abuse for what it was. Know that it was not your fault, and recognize your powerlessness over it.

Read over each of the three categories of abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual). Fill in the information in the spaces next to the items that apply to you. For each type of abuse, record the information to the best of your memory.

These are powerful memories. In thinking about these acts, be aware that an absence of feelings is a sign that you may be avoiding the work that needs to go into this Step.

Age	How old were you when the abuse started?
Abusing persons	Who abused you? Father, stepfather, mother, stepmother, adult relative, adult friend, adult neighbor, neighborhood children, professional person, brother or sister, or stranger?
Frequency	How often did it happen? Daily, two to three times a week, weekly, monthly? You may use the following scale: 1 = one time; 2 = seldom; 3 = periodically; 4 = often; and 5 = very often.

Form of Abuse	Age	Frequency	Abusing Person
Emotional Abuse			
Example: Neglect	3	5	grandparent, father
Neglect (ie., significant persons are emotionally unavailable; emotional or physical care is inadequate)			
Harassment or malicious tricks			
Being screamed at or shouted at			
Unfair punishments			
Cruel or degrading tasks			
Cruel confinement (e.g., being locked in closet; excessive grounding for long periods)			
Abandonment (e.g., lack of supervision, lack of security, being left or deserted, death or divorce removing primary caregivers) (Continued)			

Form of Abuse	Age	Frequency	Abusing Person
Touch deprivation			
Overly strict dress codes			
No privacy			
Having to hide injuries or wounds from others			
Forced to keep secrets			
Having to take on adult responsibilities as a child			
Having to watch beating of other family members			
Being caught in the middle of parents' fights			
Being blamed for family problems			
Other forms of emotional abuse			

Form of Abuse	Age	Frequency	Abusing Person
Physical Abuse			
Example: Shoving	8, 18–30	5	
Mother, stepfather, spouse			
Shoving			
Slapping or hitting			
Scratches or bruises			
Burns			
Cuts or wounds			
Broken bones or fractures			
Damage to internal organs			
Permanent injury (Continued)			

Form of Abuse	Age	Frequency	Abusing Person
Beatings or whippings			
Inadequate medical attention			
Pulling and grabbing of hair, ears, etc.			
Inadequate food or nutrition			
Other forms of physical abuse			

Form of Abuse	Age	Frequency	Abusing Person
Sexual Abuse			
Example: Flirtatious and suggestive language	6, 12-17	4	Stranger, adult neighbor
Propositioning			
Inappropriate holding, kissing			
Sexual fondling			
Masturbation			
Oral sex			
Forced sexual activity			
Household voyeurism (inappropriate household nudity, etc.)			
Sexual hugs			
Jokes about your body (<i>Continued</i>)			

Form of Abuse	Age	Frequency	Abusing Person
Use of sexualizing language			
Penetration with objects			
Bestiality (forced sex with animals)			
Criticism of your physical or sexual development			
Another's preoccupation with your sexual development			
Other forms of sexual abuse			

A way to view trauma is to look at two factors. First is how significant the impact was. Second is how often the abuse happened. So, for example, you could have something happen just a few times, but it may have a very harmful effect on you. Similarly, something done that in itself is not that harmful but is done repeatedly may cause severe stress. Look at Figure 1 to see the relationship between frequency and impact of abuse.

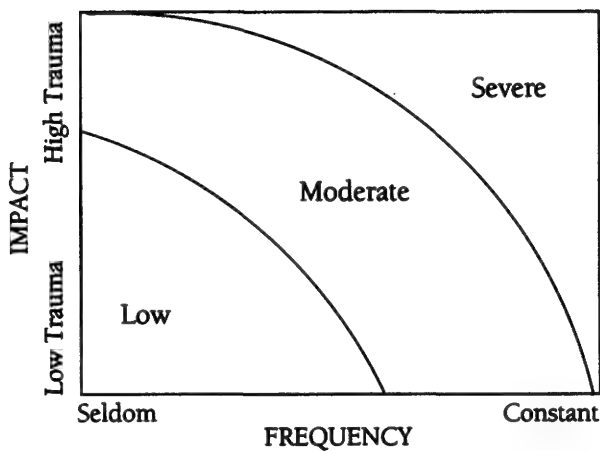


Figure 1 Impact of Abuse

For example, if you experienced touch deprivation occasionally, you might not consider the deprivation very important. But if you were deprived constantly, you might view your situation quite differently. It is not just the quantity that is important, but how you experienced the abuse that is important.

For many of us, denying the pain and reality of what was done to us has been a source of our insanity. Accepting our powerlessness is not saying that it was okay; it is recognizing, maybe for the first time, that the abuse was not okay. Until we can accept the fear, anger, and sadness, we cannot grieve. It is our grieving that helps us to accept our powerlessness.

How has the abuse you received as a child affected you? How do you feel in reflecting on these events? What has been the impact on your addictive or coaddictive behavior? Record your answers on the next page.

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Gentleness Break

You have just completed a significant piece of work. Congratulations! Before you continue with the First Step exercise, stop and reward yourself. Choose one or more of the following activities to be gentle with yourself. If none of these appeals to you, find one of your own. If you feel compelled to keep on working, remember that you can become compulsive about the workbook, too.

Pet a warm puppy.

Play with a child.

Enjoy a long nap.

Make a cup of tea.

Walk with a friend.

Ask for a hug.

Do something not useful but fun.

Sit by a lake or a stream.

Work in a garden.

Meditate.

Listen to favorite music.

Talk with a friend.

Read a novel.

Watch the sun set.

Sit with a teddy bear.

Ask someone to nurture you.



Step One for Addicts

We admit we are powerless over

(insert alcohol or sex, etc.)

and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Acceptance of the First Step paves the way to recovery. As you grow to understand your own powerlessness and how unmanageable your life became when you tried to control your addiction, you begin to understand the power that addiction has had over your life. Acknowledging your powerlessness and recognizing the unmanageability in your life will help to prepare you to use the rest of the Twelve Steps.

Fill in the following chart for a clearer picture of your addiction. Either write your examples out in detail, or say a word or two that will remind you of the situation. Sharing your First Step with your group or your guides will allow them to help you in your recovery. Doing the worksheet and keeping it to yourself will not help your recovery. (See “Sharing Your First Step.” If one aspect of addiction does not apply to you, just leave it blank.)

Aspect of Addiction

Give three or more examples.

1. Obsessing or fantasizing about my addictive behavior

2. Trying to control my behavior

3. Lying, covering up, or minimizing my behavior

4. Trying to understand or rationalize my behavior

5. Effects on my physical health

6. Feeling guilty or shameful about my behaviors (or the other extreme—feeling defiant or prideful about my behaviors)

7. Effects on my emotional health

8. Effects on my social life

9. Effects on my school or work life

10. Effects on my character, morals, or values

11. Effects on my spirituality

12. Effects on my financial situation

13. Contact with the police or courts

14. Has my preoccupation led to insane or strange behavior?

15. Has my preoccupation led to loss of memory?

16. Has my preoccupation led to destructive behavior against self or others?

17. Has my preoccupation led to accidents or other dangerous situations?

18. Do I keep overly or unnecessarily busy?

19. Do I feel depressed a lot of the time?

20. Am I able to share my feelings? If not, why not?

21. Have I changed my physical image to support my addiction?

22. Have I made promises to myself that I have broken?

23. Have I denied that I have a problem?

24. Has my addiction affected my self-esteem?

25. Have I tried to relieve my pain about my behavior? How?

26. Have I tried to manipulate people into supporting my addiction?
How?

27. Have I given up my hobbies and interests? What were these?



Powerlessness Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that show how powerless you have been to stop your behavior. Remember, “powerless” means unable to stop the behavior despite obvious consequences. Be very explicit about types of behavior and frequencies. Start with your earliest example of being powerless, and conclude with your most recent. Generate at least thirty examples. By generating as many examples as possible, you will have added significantly to the depth of your understanding of your own powerlessness. Remember gentleness. You do not have to complete the list in one sitting. Add to the list as examples occur to you. When you finish this inventory, do not proceed until you have discussed it with one of your guides. The gentle way means you deserve support with each piece of significant work.

Example: Sarah said she would leave in 1988 if I slipped again, and I did it anyway.

1. _____

2. _____

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Those examples that happened most recently will make us feel our powerlessness the most. What are the most recent examples of powerlessness? Circle five that have happened recently.



Unmanageability Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that show how your life has become totally unmanageable because of your dependency. Remember, “unmanageability” means that your addiction created chaos and damage in your life. Again, when you finish this inventory, stop and talk to your guides. You deserve support.

Example: Got caught stealing in 1988 to support my addiction.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
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13. _____
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15. _____
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27. _____
28. _____
29. _____
30. _____

Those examples that happened most recently will make us feel our unmanageability the most. What are the most recent examples of unmanageability? Circle five that have happened for you in the last ten days. Circle five that have happened for you in the last thirty days.



Step One for Coaddicts

We admit we are powerless over coaddiction to

(insert type of addiction)

and that our lives have become unmanageable.

Acceptance of the First Step paves the way to recovery. When new to the Twelve Step program, most people find it easier to recognize the “sick” behavior of the addict than to recognize their own coaddictive behavior. As you grow to understand your own powerlessness and how unmanageable your life became when you tried to control the addiction, you begin to understand the power that addiction has had over your life. Acknowledging your powerlessness and recognizing your unmanageability will help prepare you to use the rest of the Twelve Steps.

Fill in the following chart for a clearer picture of your coaddiction. Either write your examples out in detail, or say a word or two that will remind you of the situation. Sharing your First Step with your group or your guides will allow them to help you in your recovery. If you have a hard time thinking of examples, ask them to help you. Doing the worksheet and keeping it to yourself will not help your recovery. (See “Sharing Your First Step.”) If any aspect of coaddiction does not apply to you, just leave it blank.

Aspect of Coaddiction

Give three or more examples.

1. Obsession about the addict's behavior

2. Ways I try to control the addict's behavior

3. Lying, covering up, or minimizing the addict's behavior

4. Attempts to figure out the addict's behavior

5. Problems created by spending time with the addict when I should have focused on my own work, school, relationships, and so forth.

6. Effects on my physical health

7. Effects on my emotional health

8. Effects on my social life

9. Effects on my school or work life

10. Gave in to the addict's ideas of character, morals, or values even when they were opposed to my own (effects on my character, morals, or values)

11. Effects on my spirituality

12. Effects on my financial situation

13. Contact with the police or courts

14. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to insane or strange behavior?

15. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to loss of memory?

16. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to destructive behavior against myself or others?

17. Has my preoccupation with the addict led to accidents or other dangerous situations?

18. Have I checked through the addict's mail, journals, or other personal effects?

19. Do I dress to accommodate the addict's wishes?

20. Do I lecture the addict for his or her problem?

21. Do I punish the addict? How?

22. Do I blame myself for the addict's problem?

23. Do I use sex to get what I want?

24. Do I make excuses to not be sexual?

25. Do I attempt to persuade the addict to take care of himself or herself?

26. Am I overly responsible or irresponsible?

27. Do I keep overly busy?

28. Do I feel depressed a lot of the time?

29. Am I able to deal with my feelings?

30. Have I changed my physical image to please or displease the addict?

31. Have I believed I could or should change the addict?

32. Have I believed the addict's promises?

33. Have I denied the addiction?

34. Has the addiction affected my self-esteem?

35. Do I try to relieve the addict's pain?

36. Have I tried to manipulate the addict into changing?

37. Have I given up my hobbies and interests?

38. Has fear of rejection kept me in the relationship?

39. Do I put the pieces back together after the addict creates chaos?



Coaddict's Powerlessness Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that show how powerless you have been to stop your behavior. Remember, "powerless" means unable to stop your behavior despite obvious negative consequences. Be very explicit about types of behavior and frequencies. Start with your earliest example of being powerless and conclude with your most recent. Generate at least thirty examples. By generating as many examples as possible, you will have added significantly to the depth of your understanding of your own powerlessness. Remember gentleness. You do not have to complete the list in one sitting. Add to the list as examples occur to you. When you finish this exercise, do not proceed until you have discussed it with one of your guides. The gentle way means you deserve support with each piece of work.

Example: I threatened to leave home in 1988 and he/she still did not stop drinking.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Those examples that happened most recently will make you feel your powerlessness the most. What are the most recent examples of powerlessness? Circle five that have happened for you in the last ten days. Circle five that have happened for you in the last thirty days.



Coaddict's Unmanageability Inventory

List as many examples as you can think of that show how your life has become totally unmanageable because of your codependency. Remember, "unmanageability" means that your coaddiction created chaos and damage in your life. Again, when you finish, stop and talk to your guides. You deserve support.

Example: In 1990, I had to get an extra job to support us because of his/her addiction.

1. _____

2. _____

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6. _____

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- 9.

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30. _____

Those examples that happened most recently will make you feel your unmanageability the most. What are the most recent examples of unmanageability? Circle five that have happened for you in the last ten days. Circle five that have happened for you in the last thirty days.

Sharing Your First Step

You have not fully taken your First Step unless you have shared it with others. One Twelve Step group has a tradition that, after ninety days in the program, a newcomer shares his or her first Step. The expectation helps remove procrastination. If you do a First Step in treatment, you may wish to do it again with your Twelve Step group. When you share your First Step, usually with a group, focus on telling about the depth and pain of your powerlessness, not necessarily your whole story. Choose incidents that are most moving to you. Get feedback and support from your guides about what to share. Remember, your goal is not to perform for others, but to help you see and accept your powerlessness. The more honest you are, the more relief you will feel.

The First Step invites you to share freely, holding little back. This is called “taking a Step” and means a fundamental acknowledgment of the illness and a surrender to a different life. Some people go through the motions of a First Step without actually taking the Step. They avoid the Step by sharing examples of their powerlessness and unmanageability, as if they are unrelated: They are detached from the impact of their illness. Taking the Step means clearly admitting the patterns of the illness and sharing the feelings that accompany the realization that you have been out of control. Healing occurs only when the Step goes past intellectual acceptance to emotional surrender.

Here’s a comparison of some of the characteristics of *taking* versus *avoiding* a Step:

Taking a Step

Deliberate

Thoughtful

Emotionally present

Feelings congruent with reality

Statements of ownership of feelings and responsibility for behavior

Avoiding a Step

Speedy

Just reporting

Emotionally absent

Absence of feelings

Blame, denial, projection

Events form patterns

Acceptance

Acknowledge impact

Surrender to illness

See addiction as part of life

Events seem isolated

Defensiveness

Deny impact

Attempt to limit illness

See addiction as something to
be fixed

Be aware of the tendency to become detached when telling your story. Try to remain open to both your own feelings and the group with whom you are sharing.

There are many reasons why people avoid, sometimes indefinitely, taking their First Step. Read the following items and see if any apply to you:

Failure of courage To face an illness requires great courage. Some people are unable or unwilling to do it. If you find yourself thinking that you don't really need to do anything or that you can handle it by yourself, find someone in the program to support you in your fearful moments.

Not witnessing a good First Step If you have never seen a First Step taken, then you have no real model of what to do. Watch someone else take the First Step, or ask your guide to talk to you about his or her First Step—how it was taken, what it meant.

Inadequate preparation If you have not carefully prepared and consulted with your guides—that is, if you haven't carefully examined your own story—do not proceed. A First Step is not something you can do hastily.

Denial of impact If you find yourself minimizing ("Things were not so bad") or wondering if you are making something out of nothing, it's time to go back over your story with your guides.

Acting out Actively holding on to some aspect of the addiction or coaddiction, even in some very small way, will interfere with taking your First Step. Remember, you will not feel better until you completely stop your compulsive behavior.

Holding on to a major secret Secrets most often involve shame, and shame will serve as a barrier to the self-acceptance necessary in taking a First Step. Share the secret with your guides or therapist before proceeding.

Distrust of group Having confidence in your group is necessary in order for you to take the risks for your First Step work. If you do not feel comfortable in the group, talk to your guides about your options.

Inadequate understanding of the Twelve Step program When you were brought into the program, someone explained how the Steps work. Each Step has a special purpose; all Twelve Steps taken in order will lead you to recovery. If you are still confused about the program, seek some help before attempting your Step work.

The concept of the “addictive personality shift” will help you here. Addicts and coaddicts acknowledge that in their illness, it seems like there are two people inside them—the real person who tries to live up to values and cares about people, and another person whose values and relationships are sacrificed to addictive obsession. This Jekyll-Hyde experience is very common. The addict within us all is, in the words of the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous, “cunning and baffling.” Even being able to recognize the shift from when you are your true self and when your addict has taken over is an extremely helpful tool for detaching from your addict’s power.

In terms of your First Step, your addict within will work hard to sabotage your efforts at an open sharing of your illness. List below five ways your addict might try to interfere with your First Step.

Example: Rationalization—“When I was drinking, my boss loved my work.”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Sharing your Step work is crucial throughout the program.

Guide Reactions

This page is reserved for comments from your guides about your progress on your First Step. It is a place where they can write their encouragement, support, and reactions. This, too, is part of your history. Completing this page and the other guide reaction pages in this workbook is optional, not a requirement. Remember, though, that part of recovery is learning to accept support and praise, and this is a good time to begin.

Guides write here:

[illegible]

Guide name:

Date: _____



The Serenity Prayer

No better statement of our need to reestablish balance in our lives can be found than in the Serenity Prayer.

God grant me the serenity . . .

Serenity means that I no longer recoil from the past, live in jeopardy because of my present behavior, or worry about the unknown future. I seek regular times to re-create myself and I avoid those times of depletion that make me vulnerable to despair and to old self-destructive patterns.

to accept the things I cannot change . . .

Accepting change means that I do not cause suffering for myself by clinging to that which no longer exists. All that I can count on is that nothing will be stable—except how I respond to the transforming cycles in my life of birth, growth, and death.

the courage to change the things I can . . .

Giving up my attempts to control outcomes does not require that I give up my boundaries or my best efforts. It does mean my most honest appraisal of the limits of what I can do.

and the wisdom to know the difference.

Wisdom becomes the never forgotten recognition of all those times when it seemed there was no way out, and new paths opened up like miracles in my life.

Reflections on the First Step

On this page, and on pages like it at the end of each chapter, you are asked to stop and summarize your feelings about the Step you have just taken. It's important for you to appreciate the ground you have already covered, as well as to consider ways to keep from losing that ground.

Now that you have taken and shared your First Step, reflect on what it means to you. Reflect also on the Serenity Prayer. What things can you do to make the philosophy contained in this prayer part of your daily life?

[illegible]

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Celebrating Your Progress

Congratulations on completing your First Step, so crucial to your recovery. If this Step has left you open to shame attacks, you may want to spend a lot of time with people in the program who will help you stay on the gentle path. *Suggestion:* Create a celebration for yourself to mark your progress!

What are some of the gentle, healthy ways you can celebrate the new beginning you have made? What are some of the ways you can celebrate your progress as you work the program during the coming weeks and months?



Step Two



Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves
could restore us to sanity.

Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over
to the care of God *as we understood Him*.

I was raised Catholic. It was Christmas time, and I was in the first grade. The priest of our little country parish called my mother and asked if I could serve as an altar boy on Christmas morning. I expressed some fear, because I had never done it before, nor had I been through the “altar boy training program.” He told me to come early that morning and he would show me all I needed to know.

On that fateful morning I dutifully showed up early. My mother, thrilled at the prospect of my serving at Mass on Christmas morning, had invited her five sisters and their families to join us. This had now become a high-drama event. My fear was escalating. Old Father Yanny, however, was very reassuring. There were only two things I had to remember. One was when I was to move the “Book” from one side of the altar to the other. The second was to ring a set of bells whenever he put his right hand on the altar. In those days, the bell was a signal to the congregation to kneel, sit, or stand at different points in the liturgy.

Father Yanny was getting on in years. He probably wasn’t aware that he often leaned on the altar to steady himself—using his right hand. When he leaned, I rang. When I rang, the congregation moved. I had that church going up and down, up and down. My mother was mortified. My aunts thought it was great, and they tell the story to this day.

Whether it was “right” or not, the people moved when the bell rang. As an adult, I think of that experience as a metaphor about religion. For many, it often seems like a forced or meaningless motion. How

many of us have become detached from a spiritual life because the ritual does not fit our lives?

I remember a patient who told this story about family week. It was Sunday morning and his spouse was attending service in the church across the road. He sat in his room, looking at that church, knowing she was inside. He was moved by her faithfulness, especially about how important their relationship was to her. With that emotion he had a flash of insight about how he had put “faith” in the wrong things as part of his illness. With the tears that came, he felt connected to his partner and the presence of his Higher Power. For most, the story is the same. Spiritual things happen when you admit suffering.

Ultimately, this question of meaning is a spiritual one. Steps Two and Three ask, Whom do you trust? Whom or what do you have faith in? How much you trust others often parallels your trust in a Higher Power. If you have trouble accepting help from others and insist on handling things alone, chances are you will resist the help of a Higher Power in your life. Many addicts who have worked the program realize that if they refuse help after admitting that they are powerless and damaged, they will remain stuck in their insanity.

The First Step asks you to admit that you have an illness. Steps Two and Three ask you to confront the question of what gives your life meaning. Without meaning in your life, your addiction and coaddiction can grow and thrive. Without meaning, you cannot establish the priorities that help you restore the balance, focus, and self-responsibility you seek.

Six things will make these Steps easier:

1. **Spiritual Care Inventory**—Helps you identify obstacles to completing Step Two and Step Three.
2. **Loss of Reality Inventory**—Helps you focus on your priorities.
3. **Paths to Spirituality**—There are many ways to experience spirituality. This exercise allows you to reflect on some spiritual moments you may have experienced but hadn't identified as spiritual.
4. **Spiritual Path Affirmations**—These affirmations will help replace the negative messages and ideas we learned about God with positive ones.

5. One-Year-to-Live Fantasy—An exercise in confronting your own death. Provides perspective on the spirituality and meaningfulness of your life.

6. Letter to Your Higher Power—Gives you a concrete way to express your spiritual decisions.

Remember to include your guides in this process.



Spiritual Care Inventory

Openness to Spirituality—A Self-Assessment

Consider the following:

In a grocery store, when searching for something you cannot find, do you (check one):

- ☐ Keep searching until you find it.
- ☐ Ask for help.

When putting something together from a kit, do you (check one):

- ☐ Follow directions carefully.
- ☐ Quickly go through the instructions only when you get stuck.
- ☐ Figure it out for yourself.

When you are personally in pain and need support, do you usually:

- ☐ Talk to people immediately.
- ☐ Wait until the crisis is over and then tell people.
- ☐ Get through it the best way you can without help.

As you responded to these situations, did you discover a pattern of not letting yourself be helped? Often addicts and coaddicts rely solely on themselves.

As an addict or coaddict, you have relied on your obsessions to deal with pain and difficulty. You may have learned not to depend on people for help, care, and support. It is probable that you learned not to accept help based on the way your primary caregivers treated you as a child. Consider the following list of people. How did they affect your ability to receive help? Did they support you when you made a mistake? Did they show you how to do things, or did they expect you to know without being taught?

Your father

Your mother

Brothers and sisters

Other significant adults (specify)

Teacher (specify)

Employers (specify)

Clergy (specify)

Describe your feelings when it becomes necessary for you to ask for help:

beginning	scared	uncertain	tentative
learner	vulnerable	rebellious	challenging
resisting	nontrusting	questioning	testing
loner	unique	free	separate
individualist	detached	cooperative	nurturing
guiding	assisting	directing	reliable

From the list of twenty-four words above, select the six words that most aptly describe you. Now these same twenty-four words are arranged below in terms of dependence, counterdependence, independence, and interdependence. Find the six words you selected above and circle them again. Have you circled three or more words in any one category?

Dependence Counterdependence Independence Interdependence

beginning	rebellious	loner	cooperative
scared	challenging	unique	nurturing
uncertain	resisting	free	guiding
tentative	nontrusting	separate	assisting
learner	questioning	individualist	directing
vulnerable	testing	detached	reliable

The terms can be defined as follows:

Dependence—We need and want help.

Counterdependence—We need help but resist it.

Independence—We are self-sufficient and do not need help.

Interdependence—We give and get help to and from others.

Higher Power Attitude Index

Now that you know how you normally react when you need help from others, you may take a spiritual attitude inventory. Accepting your reality does not mean making excuses for continuing with your insanity. It means you recognize where you are and how you need to change to become responsible for yourself.

Circle the six words that best describe how you understand God or your Higher Power:

judgmental	strict	negative	rigid
cruel	arbitrary	caring	trustable
loving	purposeful	compassionate	predictable
distant	indifferent	uncaring	nonattentive
absent	disengaged	hoax	unreal
nonexistent	fanciful	imaginary	joke

Your perceptions of a Higher Power have evolved over the years. Before you can be truly reflective about a Higher Power, you need to clarify your attitudes toward God. Four ways of viewing God exist for many of us:

A punishing God who punishes our mistakes but does not reward or help.

An accepting God who accepts that we fail and cares anyway.

A noninvolved God who is detached and unconcerned with our lives.

A nonexistent God from whom no help is available.

From the list of twenty-four words, you selected six words that most aptly described your perceptions of God. These twenty-four words are arranged into four columns, each representing a different view of God: punishing, accepting, noninvolved, or nonexistent. Circle the six words you selected previously. Does any category include three or more words?

Punishing	Accepting	Noninvolved	Nonexistent
judgmental	caring	distant	hoax
strict	trustable	indifferent	unreal
negative	loving	uncaring	nonexistent
rigid	purposeful	nonattentive	fanciful
cruel	compassionate	absent	imaginary
arbitrary	predictable	disengaged	joke

Are there patterns in the words you selected?

Are there any correlations between the adjectives that describe your Higher Power and the descriptions of how the caregivers in your life helped you?

How have your perceptions of God or your Higher Power changed over time?

How does your current mode of accepting help (dependent, counterdependent, independent, and interdependent) fit with your perception of God or your Higher Power?

Name the five persons who most influenced your attitudes toward God or your Higher Power:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Do they have anything in common?

What obstacles does your religious background or upbringing give you for trusting a Higher Power?

What strengths does your religious background or upbringing give you for trusting in a Higher Power?

Based on what you have learned about recovery so far, how do you see the “turning over” process of Step Three? What are the things that might prevent you, emotionally and intellectually, from accepting the help of a Higher Power?

[illegible]

In what ways do you see a Higher Power working in your life now?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____



Loss-of-Reality Inventory

Even after recognizing the unmanageability of our lives in the First Step, many of us still do not want to use the word *insanity* to describe our own behavior and thinking. Denial and delusion come from addictive and coaddictive, impaired thinking. Considering that insanity involves some loss of touch with reality, addicts and coaddicts need to regain perspective on what is real and what is not. Spirituality will continue to elude us if we persist in delusion. The following are three descriptive categories of reality loss.

1. **No reality** You “lose” your memory from a combination of factors, including obsession, overextension, exhaustion, or anxiety and intoxication. Or, you lose contact with here-and-now events because of the same combination. One recovering coaddict described her experience with loss of reality: “We were newlyweds in our first year of marriage. One night my husband was arrested for voyeurism. I functioned perfectly through that embarrassing night, and when I awoke the next day I had forgotten all about it. And I continued to have no memory of it for thirty years, until two years ago, when I started my own recovery. Now I can remember every detail, the colors, what I wore, every minute.”

Reflect on your own experience with no reality and loss of memories:

2. **Distortion of reality** Reality is blurred because of the power the addiction has over you. Think of things you thought were true because your addict wanted them to be true. Or, think of how you have distorted reality because of faulty beliefs. (If you start with a faulty belief, such as "Women have to be seduced in order to enjoy sex," your thought processes will naturally be faulty as well. You may believe, for example, that seduction is the only way to get sexual needs met.)

Reflect on your own distortions of reality:

A group in Colorado developed a distorted core belief exercise called "I'm only lovable if...." Examples are "I'm only lovable if I'm sexual," "I'm only lovable if I'm perfect," "I'm only lovable if I don't ask for anything."

Complete your own "I'm only lovable if..." delusion exercise:

I'm only lovable if _____

I'm only lovable if _____

I'm only lovable if _____

I'm only lovable if _____

3. **Ignoring reality** When you ignore reality, you fail to assess risks accurately. Or you overcome the recognition that recent experiences were disastrous by your compulsion to repeat them. An addict knows the penalties but goes ahead and does the act anyway. Risking unsafe sex, financial overextension, job loss, arrest, car accidents, loss of marriage, and legal consequences are all examples.

Describe specific examples when you ignored reality and suffered consequences:

Describe specific examples when you ignored reality and escaped the consequences:

Now reflect on your losses of reality. When you needed help, whom did you ask? When you asked your Higher Power or other people for help, was your request based on reality?



Paths to Spirituality

Across world religions and throughout the history of human experience with the Divine, we find certain universally recognized strategies to nurturing spirituality. While each person's experience is unique, these ways of approaching life maximize our availability to spiritual presence. Each of the following is a common path others have taken. We suggest you use each thought as a meditation to reflect on and journal about over the next ten days.

1. **Be as a child.** The master said, "Unless you are as one of these children," you will miss the path. The goal here is not to be naive, but to be open. Children live fully in the moment. Adults are distracted by the past and concerned about the future; children live in the now. Adults focus on what is practical; children focus on what is. Every parent has had a chance to see through a child's eyes and marvel at the world adults often miss. Children are totally engaged in what is happening around them. They want to explore and understand everything, immediately, with all their senses. It is easy to be intimate with children because they are so vulnerable and open. Spirituality is about intimacy—closeness and appreciation of oneself, others, and a Higher Power.

For some of us, to be vulnerable and open was to risk exploitation. So we built defenses and coping mechanisms that split us off from our experiences. It is partly how we lost our spiritual connection. In the safety of recovery, the challenge is to reclaim our vulnerability and openness so we can be present to the world.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery.

Native peoples are sustained spiritually by connection with the planet. They live with the immediacy of growing things. What they eat, they hunt or gather. They have a sense of what had to die that they might live. So they respect creation but are matter-of-fact about life and death. They do not miss the central reality of their existence. They are part of a larger ecology with intelligence and purpose. To survive means to acknowledge the larger rhythms of the planet.

Contemporary peoples tend to be removed from these life realities. They create buildings for spiritual life because they experience only the community, not the connection with nature. They often are not aware of where their food comes from, nor do they have any sense of its life—or where they fit in the food chain. They fear death and see nature as something to be overcome. Then they agonize over their existential aloneness.

For many recovering people, the beginning of a spiritual life started with some reconnection with the planet. What ways are available to you? Record them here. Pick one to do today, and others to do in the next weeks:

3. Develop a beginner's mind. When a Zen warrior or monk practices “emptying the mind,” it literally means discarding preoccupations and fears and being in the moment. This means emptying the mind of all preconceived, conditioned thought or prejudice—to be totally open to the moment and what it may teach. The beginner learns to appreciate the moment for what it is—a new experience. To be most responsive—whether for battle or discernment—one gives no thought to the outcomes.

Joseph Campbell and others who have studied the hero's myths in many lands notice that a similar process is central in every hero's journey. The hero comes to a point where he or she must stop worrying about what to do or how to overcome the obstacles in the way, and just do what needs to be done. Right action comes by taking the next step. But first the hero must surrender or submit to the teaching of a spiritual guide or mentor. Through this process, the hero learns the inner discernment necessary to make wise decisions. The relationship between Luke Skywalker and Yoda clearly reflects this process. Not until Luke fully sets aside his pride and surrenders does he experience the full power of The Force.

Initiation rites in primitive cultures mark an individual's passage from one state of being to a higher level. The initiate (or beginner) never knows exactly what is going to happen, but allows designated members of the community to direct the ritual process. Usually this surrender involves pain, just as it does for the hero. The initiate's suffering taps into new strengths, and new destinies emerge. The initiate is fundamentally changed.

Sadly, we lack these rites in contemporary culture. Recovering people, however, have much in common with the initiate, the hero, and the Zen Master. Steps One through Three demand surrender without knowing what will happen. With surrender comes pain and transformation. Recovery is like the hero's journey or the initiate's ordeal. Once we have begun, there is no going back. With each turn in the road, we must empty our minds once again. If we are to fully experience the unfolding reality of our lives, there is no other path.

List here the obstacles in your life to the "beginner's" mind:

4. Access your own wisdom. Emptying ourselves of distractions, preoccupations, and obsessions allows us to connect with who we really are. Henri Nouwen, the famous theologian, described this early stage of spiritual life as the “conversion of loneliness into solitude.” It means discovering what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called, “the ground of our being.” It is finding the sacred within us. When we are true to ourselves, we are most spiritual. That means tuning in to our own authentic voice.

How do we do that? Think of your own life experience. Think of the times you had an intuition that something was not going to work out, but you did it anyway. And when that turned out to be a disaster, you said, “If only I had listened to myself.” Carl Jung talked about a larger consciousness that we can tap into with our intuition—if we would listen. This is called “discernment”—the ability to see clearly what is, especially in those situations when we have no rules, laws, or prior experience to direct us. This is where divine guidance and trusting ourselves meet. All heroes come to this crossroads where they do not know the outcome but must act.

To cultivate discernment, keep a regular journal, develop a daily mediation routine, listen to music that makes you feel like yourself, and read what helps your insight and sense of self. There is no magic about this process. If you work at it, your true voice—the one that is in harmony with the larger universe—will become clear.

List five times you have ignored your inner voice:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In what ways can you deepen your own discernment?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

5. Care for your body. Loving and nurturing your body is a metaphor for every spiritual task you face and is the primary spiritual act. Jigaro Kano, the revered founder of modern judo, thought that physical discipline was a gateway to spiritual growth. Mastering the technique was the least important part. Facing your fear, emptying yourself, trusting your own voice, letting go of control, having faith in outcomes, connecting with a larger purpose, deriving meaning from the struggle—that is the primary work of the athlete. Kano also taught that physical development was a lifetime commitment—not a casual task, nor only for the young. Like the Greeks, he saw physical exercise as an essentially spiritual discipline that we must practice until we die. In the West, we tend to see fitness as an optional health concern that can be a low priority in a busy schedule. We make physical fitness into a competition and confer status symbols—Olympic gold medals or multi-million-dollar baseball contracts—on a few gifted athletes. Occasionally, when someone refers to the runner's high or the "Zen" of weightlifting, we glimpse the more profound connection between mind and body. When we separate these positive experiences from the rest of life, we split the two and add to our spiritual damage.

Here is the reality: Our body is the primary vehicle through which we experience our world. As the custodian of the organism in which we reside, we must nurture and tend to it. We must stretch and grow. Anything less splits us off from one of the central sources of awe about creation: our bodies. It is the most concrete way we have to embrace the spiritual struggle that teaches us. A contemplative life is not an inactive one. It requires the gentle but continuous flow of our energy.

List obstacles to an active physical life:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
 7. _____
 8. _____
 9. _____
 10. _____
- _____

How many of these obstacles could be restated as obstacles to a spiritual life? (Example: not enough time.) Put a check after each one that would be true of both. Record your reflection about the commonalities:

6. Search for the circles. The circle is a sacred symbol of connectedness. Plants, animals, and people decay and die and are replaced by new growth and the miracle of birth. Seasons recycle the earth. Everything and everyone is nestled in this larger connectedness. In central Africa, the symbol is a sacred snake configured so it consumes its own tail. Native American peoples used the sacred hoop to signify the four points of the compass. Christians have used the circle to describe life, death, and resurrection.

Theologian Paul Tillich described sin and grace from this perspective. He said that sin was about action that separated you from yourself, others, and God. Grace originated in connection with yourself, others, and God. The Navajo use the phrase “being in harmony.” When we truly experience this source of belonging and connecting, we find extraordinary meaning in our lives. We can understand the words of Chief Seattle when he said, “You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of their grandfathers.”

Holding hands in a Twelve Step meeting and saying the Serenity Prayer is the first experience of reconnection for many recovering people. In time they grow to realize that at any time, night or day, there is a group somewhere saying that prayer. With further understanding, they realize that each person's struggle is important to all the other members of the group, and ultimately, to all the groups. The recovery process itself is a rebirth out of the ashes. And with each person who makes it, the whole is better. In fact, the entire planet is better.

On the next page, draw a picture of your support community, using circles. Do not use any words, just indicate connections. After completing the drawing, what do you notice?

7. Find spiritual guides. In our obsessions, we are fiercely committed to handling things on our own. If we consult others, the temptation is to give them only part of the story or share after the crisis is over. To allow someone to see the full extent of our despair when it is happening in all of its untidy, ugly, and searing reality is a tremendous leap of faith. We resist it, since to acknowledge the wound is to experience the pain. We are not expected to do this alone. Absolutely essential to a spiritual path is allowing ourselves the gift of help.

Spiritual guides come mainly in three ways. First, we find trusted persons who can teach us from their own wounding experiences. We tell them how it is for us. Their perspective and support ease the pain. They give us concrete ways to connect with our Higher Power. Sponsors, clergy, therapists, mentors, teachers, elders—all come in this category.

Second, we seek spiritual community. We find spiritual guidance in groups of people—Twelve Step fellowships, religious communities, men's and women's groups—also committed to walking a spiritual path. We will connect with spiritual guides wherever we find that we are not alone, and there are celebrations and symbols of our progress together.

Finally, we are open to guidance from others around us every day. The answers to our struggles are surrounding us if we listen to the possibilities. An offhand comment by someone may have been exactly what we needed to hear. Watching some creature live its life can be a metaphor for what we need—if we allow for the possibility. Asking questions like *How am I like the wolf, the turtle or the wren?* or *How does an animal greet pain, make herself comfortable, or use caution?* opens us to a deeper connection with the natural world—and ourselves. By analogy, we can meditate on the significance for our own lives.

Reflect for a moment on how you receive direction in your life. Do you seek it, using it as a way to expand your potential? Or do you resist it and see it as an intrusion? Who have been your guides so far? How well have you used them? Record your thoughts below:

8. Accept pain as a teacher. All of us have suffered. For some, it is caused by the trauma of betrayal, neglect, or exploitation. Sometimes the source is a cataclysm that seems to have no purpose beyond destruction. All of us experience change. So we have the grief of that which is no more. A Buddhist definition of suffering is “clinging to that which changes.” Twelve Step programs basically teach us to adopt an existential view of change and suffering. It is best summarized in the Serenity Prayer:

*"God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference."*

Viktor Frankl, in his study of survivors of the Nazi concentration camps, noticed that those who survived had a common quality: the ability to transform suffering into meaning. Spirituality is about meaning and asking questions like *Why do bad things happen?* and *Who is in charge of it all?* We tend to war against difficult issues when they surface in our lives. We talk of "my fight against cancer." Part of a spiritual path involves learning to "see my illness as a teacher."

Suffering simply is. It's not fair, right, or wrong. It simply is. However, how I respond is critical. How I take action, how I grow, and how I become a more spiritual person is the most important thing. Remember the fundamental lesson the Greeks taught in their tragedies. The hero typically suffered from a tragic flaw—hubris, or the sin of pride. Oedipus and the other great heroes refused to accept their human limitations and made themselves into gods. Whenever they ignored their own limitations and wounds, however, they met a tragic fate. Our wounds help us to accept our humanness and be open to the lessons provided for us.

Make a list of five painful experiences in your life. Then list some reasons why you have come to value those experiences.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

[illegible]

Another way to view daily spirituality is to think of it as a relationship. Relationships are not sustained by dramatic encounters, but by daily efforts which over time deepen the relationship. To develop a spiritual relationship with your Higher Power takes commitment and time. Having a regular routine makes a dramatic difference. Starting is hard. We do not see results immediately. Sponsors often suggest that we “act as if.” Allow the time. Start with simple readings and meditations. Diets,

exercise programs, developing new skills—all those things are hard at first. But regular, daily work makes a difference.

One of the key discoveries is that you can make your own rituals and prayers. While many participate in spiritual communities, each person's journey is unique. So we can add our own symbols, our own patterns of meditation. We discover reflections that help us and modify them for our own use. Spirituality evolves from groping when we are in trouble to a daily extension of our internal life.

Write below your daily “spiritual recipe.” Describe it as if you were explaining it to someone who wanted to practice what you do. If you are not doing anything currently, describe what “recipe” might work for you.

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10. Work on Steps. Each of the Twelve Steps contributes to our spiritual life. Here is how:

Step One confronts the paradox of our addictive and coaddictive processes. We feel powerful when, in fact, we are powerless and need help.

Step Two challenges our grandiosity and reminds us that we are limited human beings.

Step Three underlines our efforts to control when we need to take responsibility only for ourselves and leave the rest to our Higher Power.

Step Four takes the energy out of the shame that separates us from ourselves, others, and our Higher Power. It brings acceptance.

Step Five asks us to break through the paralyzing fear that prevents us from receiving forgiveness and faith.

Step Six attacks our perfectionism, allowing us to experience our wounds so that we might heal.

Step Seven asks us to give up our willfulness so that we might allow change to work in our lives and to begin grieving.

Step Eight asks us to exchange our pride for honesty.

Step Nine challenges us to stop seeking approval and to pursue integrity by making amends for harm we have caused.

Step Ten makes a daily prescription to set aside our defenses and admit our errors.

Step Eleven asks us to trade the magical thinking of escapism for the realities of a spiritual life even though they are difficult.

Step Twelve tells us to trade in our martyrlike victim roles and share the changes in our lives with others with similar problems.

The following chart summarizes the effect of the Steps upon addictive or coaddictive behavior:

In our addiction we were		In our recovery we seek
Deluded	Step One	Reality
Grandiose	Step Two	A sense of limitations
Controlling	Step Three	Faith in others
Shameful	Step Four	Self-worth
Fearful	Step Five	Forgiveness
Perfectionism	Step Six	Healing of brokenness
Willful	Step Seven	Letting go
Prideful	Step Eight	Honesty
Approval seeking	Step Nine	Integrity
Defensive	Step Ten	Responsibility
Escapist	Step Eleven	Connectedness
Self-suffering	Step Twelve	Witnessing our path

The “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous tells us that if we do these things, certain “promises” will be fulfilled:

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word *serenity*, and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

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Spirituality Affirmations

The following list of suggested affirmations will help you reprogram yourself for spiritual openness. Read them each day, or tape record these positive messages and listen to them before falling asleep at night. Select from the list the affirmations that have meaning for you, and add some of your own. Gradually, as you repeat these affirmations to yourself, you will begin to experience and internalize your inner truth. Affirmations are a spiritual gift you can give to yourself.

Each moment of my day is filled with openness and vulnerability to the world around me.

I am connected to my planet. I experience the sky, the wind, the rain, and all the elements of my environment. I am aware of the cycle of life. Each day brings greater awareness of my place in this universe.

With an empty mind, I take in each moment as a new experience. Each moment in recovery brings transformation.

I have an inner, true voice that is in harmony with the universe. Each day I develop greater acuity and discernment in interpreting my voice's clear messages to me.

My body is my primary vehicle for embracing the awe of my world. Each day I nurture and tend to it. Stretching my body brings energy, strength, and confidence to face my struggles.

I am connected to the past, present, and future. What has gone before me is part of me and I will be a part of what goes on after me. I am part of the circle of my community. As we are all connected to the past, present, and future, we are all connected to each other.

I am open to the spiritual guidance of others. My spiritual guides are those I love and trust, those I respect, those who have a message for me and those who offer symbols to help me on my journey.

My wounds are my teachers. I am open to their lessons.

I practice my spirituality daily. My spirituality is a daily extension of my internal life.

I Affirm the Promises for Myself

I know a new freedom and happiness.

I embrace my past.

I comprehend the word serenity and know peace.

I can see how my experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness and self-pity has disappeared.

As I lose interest in selfish things, I gain interest in my fellows.

Self-seeking has slipped away.

My whole attitude and outlook upon life is changing.

Fear of people and economic insecurity has left.

I intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle me.

I realize that God is doing for me what I could not do for myself.

Create affirmations that are meaningful to you:



One-Year-to-Live Fantasy

Reclaiming reality starts with a clear sense of our limitations as human beings. But we live in a culture that denies these limitations. We are constantly invited to overextend ourselves—for example, to spend more than we earn, work more than we need to, or eat more than we should. We live as if there were no end. We literally deny our own mortality.

A powerful exercise that can show you your own limitations is to picture your own death. Looking at death provides vital perspectives about what gives your life meaning, what priorities you are ignoring, and who your Higher Power is.

Record the following fantasy on a tape recorder, then set aside some uninterrupted time to listen to it and answer the questions provided at the end. Pause for ten to fifteen seconds where indicated before you continue. Make sure you are physically comfortable. If you do not have a tape recorder, you may read the fantasy, or have your guide or a close friend read it to you.

Fantasy

Imagine that you are in your physician's office. What does it look, smell, and feel like? Your doctor comes in and tells you that results from the tests are in. You have a terminal illness. All the other doctors consulted agree. They think you will maintain your physical ability for about a year—but at the end of the year you will die. [pause]

Imagine your first reactions as you walk out of the office. What do you do? [pause] How do you spend those first few hours and days? [pause] Do you tell anyone? [pause]

As you start to adjust to your dying, do you change your life? Stop work? Do something different? [pause]

Maybe you want to do something different. Perhaps you wish to travel. Where would you go? Picture yourself traveling. Whom would you bring with you? [pause]

Perhaps you might want to do things you have never done before. Activities like skydiving, scuba diving, race car driving seemed too dangerous before, but now it doesn't make any difference. What have you always wanted to do but been afraid to do? [pause] Picture yourself doing this. Who is with you? [pause]

Almost all of us have "unfinished" parts of our lives: a book we are writing, a family room to finish, a family project like getting the family album in order for the kids. What unfinished projects would be important enough to finish before you die? [pause] Imagine yourself doing them. [pause]

For some of us, the unfinished parts include things not said to others—like "I'm sorry" or "I love you." Picture yourself saying the things you would need to say before you die. [pause]

It's now about three months before you die. You can start to feel your health fail. While you can still function, you decide to try one last thing. What would that be? [pause] What would be one of the last things you would want to do before you die? [pause] Who is with you? [pause]

It's now a matter of weeks before you die. Where do you go to die? [pause] Your home? A family farm? A lake? The mountains? The city? [pause] How do you spend those last days? [pause] Who is with you? [pause]

As you think over the events of this last year of your life, what were the most significant ones for you? [pause] In fact, think of these and all the events of your life. Which stand out now as the things that made life worthwhile? [pause]

As you reflect on these events, be aware that you are working on this workbook. And you are very much alive. Be aware of your current surroundings. Wiggle your fingers and toes to bring yourself all the way back to the present, and become ready to move on to your next activity.

About the Fantasy . . .

Often this fantasy helps people touch their own grief about losses in their lives. If you feel sad, do not avoid the feelings. Rather, use them and let them support you in coming to terms with your losses. Sharing the fantasy and your feelings with your guides can deepen your understanding of the issues the fantasy raises. First, record the details of your fantasy in the space provided. Then answer the questions that follow.

Your first reactions:

Changes you would make in your life:

New things you would try:

Unfinished things you want to complete:

Things you need to say before you die:

Describe your last fling:

Spiritual preparations:

Where and how you would spend your last days:

Throughout the fantasy there were key moments involving significant persons in your life. Whom did you involve and what did you learn about your relationship priorities?

During the fantasy, you may have found yourself doing things significantly differently from how you live now. Why would this be so? If they were so important to get done, what prevents you from doing them now?

How do you feel about facing your own death?

Thinking about death provides a way to look at what is real and what is important in our lives. How have your ideas of what is important and real to you changed after experiencing this death fantasy? What can you change in your life now to reflect these new priorities?



Gentleness Break

Before proceeding, take a gentleness break. You have already accomplished so much, and you need some time to care for yourself before going on. Here are some suggestions:

Read a story to a child.

Rediscover the fun of doodling with colored pencils or crayons.

Try a crossword puzzle.

Paddle a canoe.

Walk by a lake or stream.

Smell a flower.

Watch some birds.

Go sit in a church.

Invite a friend to take you out to dinner.

Get a massage.

Run, swim, or bike.

From this point on, there will be no more scheduled gentleness breaks. It's up to you to pace yourself and to determine when to take a break and how to spend that gentle time.



Letter to Your Higher Power

The Second and Third Steps become very concrete when you write a letter to your Higher Power. By writing the letter, you turn your belief and trust into an active process. You will find it helpful to include in your letter how you “came to believe” and what the “decision” to turn over your will and your life means to you. Be specific about what you are turning over. Remember, the Second and Third Steps are acts of confidence or faith.

People use many different names in addressing their Higher Power, but what seems to work the best is when you make it as personal as possible.

When you have written the letter, read it out loud to your guide. We need to share our spiritual experiences with others to make sense of them.

Dear _____,

Reflections on the Second and Third Steps

Trusting life comes from making some meaning of who we are, of what we are all about. When we confront shame, we become aware of emptiness, a spiritual hunger. Our attempts to fill this hunger with controlling, compulsive behaviors only lead to pain and remorse. Carl Jung was aware of this compulsive “filling of the void.” He wrote to Bill Wilson, the cofounder of AA, saying that he thought alcoholism was the search for wholeness, for a “union with God.”

—Merle A. Fossum and Marilyn J. Mason
Facing Shame: Families in Recovery

Reflect on the Fossum/Mason quote above and how you feel about the Second and Third Steps in your life.

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Guides: Express the trust or faith you have in the work the owner of this workbook has done.

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Guide name: _____

Date: _____



Step Four



Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

With the First Step you admitted your powerlessness and vulnerability. The Second and Third Steps helped you gain the support you need from your Higher Power and other people to face the reality of addiction and coaddiction in your life. With that support you can make a fearless moral inventory and use it to examine the damage your illness has caused. This thorough self-assessment will impel you to let go of much of what keeps you in your compulsive patterns. Recovery requires giving up the old ways in which you nurtured yourself by living in the extremes. In that sense, the Fourth and Fifth Steps are a grieving process. The feelings that go into the grieving process in the Fourth and Fifth Steps include discomfort, anger, fear, shame, sadness, and loneliness. Discomfort is the outer layer of feelings, anger the second layer, and so on down to the innermost feeling of loneliness.

These feelings, which are layers of your internal self, serve as a barometer of how you feel about your behavior. They can also be a structure on which you build your moral inventory.

You will find the Fourth Step inventory to be a deeply personal experience, with each layer guiding you to a deeper relationship with yourself.

Notice, however, that the innermost layer is loneliness, in which you confront the existential reality of your aloneness and estrangement. However, the program, in its wisdom, asks you in the Fifth Step to find

and share with another person the work you have done on your Fourth Step. You do not need to be alone. The program builds in more support for you at each difficult turn in your path.

The person you select to hear your Fourth Step can be someone in the program, a sponsor, or a member of the clergy. In addition to being deeply personal, the Fourth and Fifth Steps are spiritual experiences.

Before starting on your Fourth Step, set a time with the person who will hear your Fifth Step. There are several reasons for doing this. First, the Fourth Step is an awesome task and easy to put off. By making an appointment, you make a commitment to get the task done. Even if you have to reset the appointment, the focus will be on getting the Step done. Second, the person who will hear your Fifth Step may have some suggestions for you to help you in your process. Finally, you will know for sure that someone will be there for you when the path becomes difficult and painful. Again, do not forget to involve your other guides in the process as well. You do the task yourself, but you do not have to be alone. Each section will generate feelings. You do not have to wait to share them. Talk about them as they stir, not after you have figured them out.

Within each layer of feelings, you will find elements of your moral inventory that are good and positive as well as negative. As you survey the wreckage caused by your illness, you may assume that a Fourth Step focuses on all the failures, mistakes, and harm done. However, to restore integrity means to claim the successes, the goodness, the courage, and the effort as well.

Sometimes, when things seem dark, it is difficult to claim the positive in your life. If it is difficult to take credit for positive things in yourself, look at it this way. In your addiction, you probably worked hard to cover the dark side of yourself and showed only the good parts to the world. You lived between the secrets, shame, exploitation, and abuse of your hidden addict and the care, responsibility, and values of the public you. You probably even felt phony about your public self, because people did not know the real you behind the image you showed to the world. When you face the addict within you in the Fourth Step, your addiction becomes your teacher about the goodness in you. Ask yourself, Was your addict strong? Enduring? Clever? Willing to risk? Resourceful? All these are qualities your addict borrowed upon to become powerful. They are equally available to you in your recovery.

Unfortunately, many people attempt a recovery by doing the opposite of what they did in their active illness. They focus only on the bad side and bury the good. The Fourth Step presents an opportunity for you to reclaim those good parts of yourself and use them for your recovery. This is a difficult challenge, to be sure, but the result is that you get to be the real you. You don't have to have an addictive, dark side draining all your power in its secrecy. And you don't have to feel phony or insincere when you own all parts of yourself. Besides, it is much easier to face your recovery secure in the knowledge of the good things you do have to draw upon. It is the more gentle way.

The Fourth Step is a demanding and even draining experience. Pace yourself. Take several gentleness breaks. This is hard and important work, and you can take the time it deserves.

Now, proceed to your first Fourth Step inventory.



Fourth Step Inventory: Avoiding Personal Responsibility

When taking Step Four, often the first feeling you get in touch with is discomfort. When people get uncomfortable about their behavior—especially where the potential for feeling real pain exists—they look for ways to protect themselves from the consequences of that behavior. Some of these ways are dysfunctional and self-destructive. These defensive manipulations lead us to avoid responsibility. Examples include blaming others, denial, dishonesty, intimidation, and rationalization. Sometimes you may even go to great lengths to make people in your life feel crazy. You may make up stories or act in other ways to distract or divert attention from your behavior. How have you avoided taking responsibility for your behavior? Give specific examples.

Example: Pretended Bill never told me about our appointment at school when the truth is, I forgot.

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Fourth Step Inventory: Taking Personal Responsibility

Sometimes you take responsibility for your discomfort. You can, for example, set boundaries about what you wish to talk about. Or you can express your discomfort and take responsibility for your behavior. In what ways have you clearly owned your behavior? Give specific examples.

Example: Admitted to Susan that I forgot our anniversary.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Misuse of Anger

Behind your defensive behavior there is a layer of anger. Perhaps you are angry because you got caught. Perhaps you are angry because you think people will leave you because of your behavior. You nurse grudges and resentments because you do not want to admit the damage you have done. At times you may hold on to anger so that you can stay connected to others you don't want to lose emotionally. Sometimes you might use anger to justify your addiction. In what ways have you misused your anger? Give specific examples.

Example: I used resentment toward my spouse to justify an affair.

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Fourth Step Inventory: Positive Expression of Anger

Anger empowers people to resist manipulation and exploitation. Anger can give respect and dignity in abusive situations. Within an intimate relationship, anger is inevitable. Expressing anger becomes an act of trust that the other person is important and capable of handling the anger. No relationship can survive without appropriate anger. In what ways have you been respectful and assertive with your anger? Give specific examples.

Example: I got angry with my alcoholic father when he started being cruel to my children.

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Fourth Step Inventory: Paralyzed by Fear

Fear is the next layer of feelings. Fear can be immobilizing. When did you need to take action but did not? Make yourself vulnerable but did not? Take a risk but did not? Have you put off important tasks and discussions? In what ways have you compromised yourself by being stuck in your fear? Give specific examples.

Example: I was afraid to admit how frightened I was to leave my job—so no one understood.

1. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Respect for Fear

Fear serves as an important guide for your safety. Sometimes it helps you to avoid disasters and take care of yourself. When have you listened to your fear appropriately? Give specific examples.

Example: I knew it was not a good idea to date the guy I met at the airport this early in my recovery.

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Fourth Step Inventory: Taking Healthy Risks

Moments occur in which you have to set your fears aside and take significant risks. What risks have you taken for your own growth? Give specific examples.

Example: I had an idea about a new business and took the risk to try it.

1. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Shameful Events

At an even deeper layer, addicts feel shame. You need to know where you have not lived up to your values or when you have failed to practice what you preach. Since you tell yourself that other people do not do what you did, you believe that if they found out, you would be rejected. You feel fundamentally embarrassed about yourself and unlovable. And the more shameful you feel, the more secretive you are.

A more realistic—and gentler—way of looking at your failures is to see that you are a limited human being who makes mistakes, who is lovable and forgivable. You must also remember the powerlessness and unmanageability of your illness. With these things in mind, in what ways have you not lived up to your own values? (*Suggestion:* A good guideline is to start with a list of the things you have kept secret—these are at the core of shame.) Remember, be specific.

Example: A major secret I have is . . . or I feel really bad about . . .

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Pride in Your Achievements

As a balance, you need to account for your achievements. Think of those moments when you lived up to your values or followed through on what you said you would do. Don't forget those times when you were courageous or generous and exceeded your expectations. List those times when you were intimate, vulnerable, and caring. Don't forget to include your entry into your recovery program and getting this far in the workbook! In what do you take pride? Give specific examples.

Example: I feel good about how I supported my son when he was hurt last fall.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Losses and Painful Events

Beneath shame, there is often a feeling of sadness. Many variations of sadness exist for anyone who has lived with addictive extremes. First, you grieve for all the losses: time, people, opportunities, and dreams. Second, your sorrow for those you have harmed may be quite overwhelming. Finally, there is your pain about how deeply you have been hurt by this illness. In what ways are you sad? What losses do you feel? Give specific examples in each category.

Example: I am sorry about all the times I missed being with my children.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4.

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10. _____

I have pain about these events.

Example: I hurt because of my teacher's abuse of me.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Learning from Sadness

An old Buddhist saying suggests that suffering is “clinging to that which changes.” Grief, sorrow, and pain simply are part of life—especially given your powerlessness over your illness and commitment to recovery. When you work through the feelings, they remain with you and add depth to who you are. You integrate new learnings. Despite the losses, your life is better than before. What gains have you made through your sadness? Give specific examples.

Example: I have learned I can live independently since my divorce.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Beliefs About Your Unworthiness

The final feeling you will reach through your Fourth Step is that of loneliness. Loneliness is created by feelings of unworthiness that separate us from others. Addicts and coaddicts have lost the most important relationship of all—the relationship with themselves. How you treat yourself becomes the lens through which you view others. Fidelity to oneself results in faithfulness to others. Integrity with oneself generates trust of others. At our core, we are alone. So each of us needs to learn to enjoy ourselves, love ourselves, trust ourselves, and care for ourselves.

A word of caution: This final layer may be the hardest of all to be honest about. You might find all kinds of ways to resist doing this last part thoroughly. Since your relationship with yourself is the foundation of your recovery, take time to face this part of the inventory squarely.

You need to list beliefs you have about your own unworthiness—that is, about being a “bad” person. Seeing oneself as a flawed human being is core to the belief system of all addicts and coaddicts. Some of these faulty beliefs are easily identified as not true. Others are harder to contest. List all of them you can think of.

Example: I am a deceptive person.

1. _____

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Fourth Step Inventory: Self-hatred

After listing the beliefs you hold about your unworthiness, you need to be as explicit as possible about how deep the roots of your self-hatred go. As an addict, you have become an expert at beating yourself up. What things are you hardest on yourself about? Make a list of examples of self-hatred, including ways you have punished yourself, hurt yourself, put yourself down, or sold yourself out. Do not forget to include fantasies of terrible things happening to you because you somehow “deserve” them.

Example: I take projects almost to the end and don't finish them.

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Fourth Step Inventory: Self-affirmations

An affirmation is a statement about some goodness in you. Spend some time thinking about the many positive qualities you possess. How are you enjoyable, loving, caring, and trustworthy? This may also be a difficult task. Sometimes, early in recovery, good things are more evident to others than they are to you. Ask for help. When you have completed your list, you might want to read it into a tape recorder. You will have a ready-made series of affirmations when you need them.

Example: I am a person of great courage.

1. I am _____
2. I am _____
3. I am _____
4. I am _____
5. I am _____
6. I am _____
7. I am _____
8. I am _____
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29. I am _____
30. I am _____

Reflections on the Fourth Step

The difficult road is the road of conversion, the conversion from loneliness into solitude. Instead of running away from our loneliness and trying to forget or deny it, we have to protect it and turn it into a fruitful solitude. To live a spiritual life, we must first find the courage to enter into the desert of our loneliness and to change it by gentle and persistent efforts into a garden of solitude. This requires not only courage, but also a strong faith. As hard as it is to believe that the dry, desolate desert can yield endless varieties of flowers, it is equally hard to imagine that our loneliness is hiding unknown beauty. The movement from loneliness to solitude, however, is the beginning of any spiritual life because it is the movement from the restless senses to the restful spirit, from the outward-reaching cravings to the inward-reaching search, from the fearful clinging to the fearless play.

—Henry Nouwen
Reaching Out

Read the words of Henri Nouwen above and reflect on the process of going through the layers of your Fourth Step.

Record here your reactions to facing your own loneliness.



Sharing Step Five: Suggestions for the Turning Point

Successful Fifth Steps come from sharing your written inventory with another person who will recognize and note the sources of greatest feeling or the places where you were stuck. As consultant as well as witness, the person who hears your Fifth Step will help you over the difficult parts of your story.

Remember also that the whole Fifth Step does not have to be done in one session. Some people who listen to Fifth Steps regularly recommend two to three sessions as opposed to a marathon event in which you share all your work at one time. Don't forget the gentleness of the path you are on.

Addicts and coaddicts often say that completing the Fifth Step was a real turning point in their recovery, that the first three Steps took on new meaning, and that they felt anchored in the program. The Fifth Step does provide special support in the person who hears your story at perhaps the most difficult point in the program. The loneliness of the Fourth Step becomes an opportunity for reaching out. A special intimacy occurs when someone accepts you even though he or she knows the very worst things about you. That experience of closeness can be duplicated as you deepen bonds with others in your life.

Spaces are provided on the following pages for you and the person you have shared your Fifth Step with to record your reactions, your feelings, and the progress you have made. Have fun with it together.

My feelings in sharing my Fifth Step

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Your name: _____

Date: _____

My feelings in hearing your Fifth Step

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Witness: _____

Date: _____



Fifth Step Reconciliation Rite

A reader from California said he thought something was missing from the Fourth and Fifth Step exercise, but he didn't know what. When we received this gift of a reconciliation rite from an Episcopal priest, it seemed to provide the missing piece. In the priest's letter, she told us she uses it in all of the Fifth Step work that she does.

A Fifth Step is done to reestablish friendship and harmony with oneself and one's Higher Power.

- Think of one word to symbolize all you have disclosed.
- Hold out your hands to form a cup, as if someone were going to pour water into your hands.
- Say the word that represents your Fifth Step. Imagine the word resting in your hands.
- Slowly pour your Fifth Step from your hands onto the ground, as if you are letting water pour from your hands. Brush your hands, as you would to brush off sand.
- If you are doing this in the presence of your guide or your group, have them say to you, while they place a hand on you, "That which has kept you divided within yourself is gone. You are whole again."
- Repeat the phrase for yourself, "That which has kept me divided within myself is gone. I am whole again."
- Allow yourself to feel your feelings and meditate a few moments longer.

The feeling of being forgiven by a Higher Power can lead to self-forgiveness. Forgiving oneself begins the process of healing our brokenness.

Record your thoughts and feelings:

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Reflections on the Fifth Step

It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks through our darkness, and it is as though a voice is saying, "You are accepted." **YOU ARE ACCEPTED**, accepted by that which is greater than you and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now, perhaps you will know it later. Do not try to do anything, perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything, do not perform anything, do not intend anything, **SIMPLY ACCEPT THE FACT THAT YOU ARE ACCEPTED.**

—Paul Tillich

Read the Paul Tillich quote above and reflect on the acceptance you experienced from doing your Fifth Step.

Record your thoughts and feelings here:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Step Six



Were entirely ready to have God remove all
these defects of character.

Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

The Fourth and Fifth Steps revealed two types of shortcomings. The first are “defects” that you originally learned as survival tools. You developed many of your defenses as a way to cope with growing up. For example, isolation may have been the only way to cope with abuse in your family. Now that you are in recovery, you can discard dysfunctional ways of taking care of yourself. You can embrace new, healthy ways. In that sense, this stage of recovery parallels giving birth—a wondrous, painful, and at times ugly process. The exercises in this chapter are designed to help you remove your shortcomings, use a lifestyle inventory to bring your life into manageability, and develop relapse prevention tools to help you stay on the gentle path of recovery.

One thing that can stop this process is relapse—which brings us to the other type of shortcomings, the “friends” of the addict within. These friends of the addict are grandiosity, pride, willfulness, jealousy, depression, suicidal preoccupation, those aspects of yourself that combine to make you vulnerable to your addiction and coaddiction. These are the shortcomings that can return you to the compulsive spirals you were in before you entered the program. Some of these shortcomings may have helped you survive in the past, but now they are a gateway to disaster.

Several tasks can help you with the Sixth and Seventh Steps:

• **Affirmations** Steps Six and Seven ask us to be willing to remove our defects. These affirmations are written to help you let go of old, familiar habits and attitudes and develop your new and positive character strengths.

✿ **Removing Character Defects** Helps to identify character defects. In this task, you make a list of those shortcomings you are willing to turn over to your Higher Power and the positive qualities to replace them with. For example, if dishonesty is your shortcoming, honesty is what you are working toward. Transforming weaknesses into strengths is what recovery is all about.

✿ **Seventh Step Meditation** Helps you visualize your life without defects and shortcomings. This exercise helps you develop a positive vision of the person you are becoming in recovery. You compose a meditation or prayer to help you remember that your Higher Power can help in this process.

✿ **Personal Crazyiness Index** Another task is to fill out a Personal Crazyiness Index (PCI, pronounced “picky”), a playful tool with a serious intent—to prevent relapse. The leading cause of relapse is lifestyle imbalance—being overstretched or overextended. At these times the “friends” of the addict within are immediately available.

✿ **When Crises Occur** Under stress it is easy to forget our new recovery behavior tools. That is why it is so important to recognize a crisis when it happens and respond with the new behaviors and inner resources you are learning about.



Affirmations

Affirmations can help us change our behavior. We can replace unhealthy messages with messages we select. Each affirmation is written in the present—as if you are already accomplishing it. Even though it may not be a reality for you today, you need to “act as if.” In time, telling yourself positive messages will become a familiar habit. Recovery is really a retraining program. It’s about learning new ways to relate to ourselves and others. As our attitudes improve, so do our lives.

Read these affirmations to yourself or record them on tape and play them back. Pause a few seconds after each. Let the words sink deep into your consciousness. For greatest effect, repeat the exercise often.

I enjoy taking responsibility for those things that order my life and make my life free of hassle.

I allow others to take responsibility for their lives.

I enjoy taking care of my body.

Exercise makes me feel healthy, strong, and happy.

Good nutrition allows my body to maximize its potential.

I do everything I need to keep myself healthy, fit, and feeling good.

I get the rest and relaxation I need.

I am financially responsible. I earn more than I spend.

Each day I become more organized in all areas of my life.

I accept that I can make mistakes and still keep trying.

I am grateful for a sense of humor that helps me know that I am human.

I meet all my obligations. I accept only those obligations which I can meet.

Being on time is easy for me. I am always on time.

I have the courage to change.

I take risks that will help me grow in positive, healthy ways.

I value my emotions as a cherished part of me, a part to get to know, understand, and love more each day.

My interpersonal relationships are healthy, open, and honest.

I maintain the rituals of my spirituality.

I always allow enough time to get where I am going. I am responsible, relaxed, and organized in getting to and from my destinations.

I use my time, my money, my energy, and all of my resources responsibly.

Create affirmations that are meaningful to you:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Step Six: Removing Character Defects

Bryan, from Texas, uses *The Gentle Path* with the people he sponsors. He recognizes that addicts and coaddicts tend to feel deprived when they think of giving up something or having it removed. It is important to remember that sobriety is not about depriving oneself, but about learning how to do things differently. This exercise is designed to help you replace unhealthy defects and shortcomings with healthy behaviors.

List below your character defects or shortcomings as you see them. As you list each one, focus on the positive it can become, and list that positive quality in the parallel column.

Defects and shortcomings I am willing to turn over

Example: Dishonesty

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Qualities I wish to work towards

Example: Honesty

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
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9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____



Reflecting on your shortcomings, compose a prayer or meditation that you can use in times of stress to ask for help with your shortcomings. *Suggestion:* Include reminders of how desperate you were in your addiction, of your commitment to recovery, and of your powerlessness.

[illegible]

Lifestyle imbalance makes the addict vulnerable to relapse in the following ways.

Feelings of entitlement When overextended, addicts and coaddicts seek addictive nurturing because they are so depleted. They tell themselves they are entitled and “deserve” it, rationalizing the return to self-destructive patterns.

Increase of cravings When there is not enough time to take care of oneself, urges to repeat the old cycle multiply. Obsessional thinking is a relief to current stress.

Return of denial In periods of imbalance, euphoric recall makes old cycles seem attractive again. Deluded thinking avoids the probable consequences of a return to previous behavior.

Reduction of coping ability Overextension diminishes your ability to cope with problems. Bad decisions and poor problem solving further compound the crises in an unmanageable life.

Participation in high-risk behaviors Destructive situations, persons, and events that are normally avoided become attractive under stress. The reality of unsafe behavior becomes distorted by overextension.

When you were in high school or college, you may have participated in an athletic program. Preparing for the stress of competition is called training. An athlete prepares for a stressful event (a match, game, or tournament) by observing a training program that creates extra margins of endurance and strength and that develops skills for the event. Similarly, addicts and coaddicts in a recovery program are training to participate in life. You know that you are going to experience stress, and you must prepare for that. The Twelve Steps will help you learn the necessary skills, but you also need to develop a lifestyle that builds up reserves of strength and endurance.

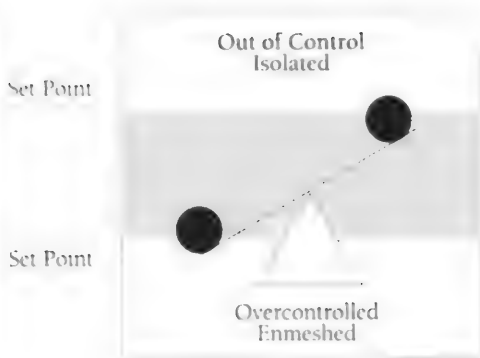
Think of your life as having an addiction “set point”—the point at which the imbalance leaves you vulnerable to addiction, when you are too stressed or overextended to maintain your recovery.

Lifestyle Balance



**Well prepared to handle
life's problems and
maintain recovery**

Lifestyle Imbalance



Vulnerable to Addiction

By developing a sense of what your own personal set point is, you can be alert to maintaining the balance that makes you less vulnerable to the “friends” of your addict. The PCI on page 214 will help you develop some criteria for recognizing when you have passed that point of sanity and are at risk. The PCI thus can become a set of “training” guidelines under which you train for anticipated stress. In addition, by keeping track of your own PCI for a period of time, you will get better and better at maintaining lifestyle balance and having some fun.



Personal Crazyiness Index

Part One—Preparation

The Personal Crazyiness Index (PCI) is based on two assumptions:

1. Crazyiness first appears in routine, simple behaviors that support lifestyle balance.

2. Behavioral signs will occur in patterns involving different parts of our lives. Thus, we can be caught up in issues of cosmic importance and not notice that our checking account is overdrawn. If our checking account is overdrawn, we are probably out of socks as well, because we have not done our laundry. If this pattern is pervasive, there is a risk that our lives will become emotionally bankrupt as well—cosmic issues notwithstanding.

Addicts and coaddicts are particularly vulnerable to the “insanity” of loss of reality from having neglected the basics. “Keep it simple” and “a day at a time” are not shopworn clichés, but guidelines borne out by the experience of many recovering people. The PCI helps you to remember what you need to do each day. It helps you establish good recovery habits. Without a structured process to keep you on track, “cunning and baffling,” self-destructive behavior patterns will return. You’ll also find the PCI helpful during periods of stress and vulnerability.

The process of creating your own PCI is designed to be as value-free as possible. Each person uses his or her own criteria to develop the index. In other words, you are asked to generate behavioral signs (or “critical incidents”) which, through your own experience, you have learned to identify as danger signs or warnings that you are “losing it,” “getting out of hand,” or “burnt out.” Thus, you will judge yourself by your own standards.

You may change the items in the index as you progress in your recovery. The following are ten areas of personal behavior suggested as sources of danger signs. Please add some of your own, if you wish.

1. **Physical Health** The ultimate insanity is to not take care of our bodies. Without our bodies, we have nothing, yet we seem to have little

time for physical conditioning. Examples are being overweight, abusing cigarettes or caffeine, not getting regular exercise, eating junk food, getting insufficient sleep, and having a lingering sickness. When do you know that you are not taking care of your body (at least three examples)?

2. **Transportation** How people get from place to place is often a statement about their lifestyles. Take, for example, a car owner who seldom comes to a full stop, routinely exceeds the speed limit, runs out of gas, does not check the oil, puts off needed repairs, has not cleaned out the back seat in three months, and averages three speeding tickets and ten parking tickets a year. Or the bus rider who always misses the bus, never has change, forgets his or her briefcase on the bus, and so forth. What transportation behaviors indicate that your life is getting out of control (at least three examples)?

3. **Environment** To not have time to do your personal chores is a comment on the order of your life. Consider the home in which plants go unwatered, fish unfed, grocery supplies depleted, laundry not done or put away, cleaning neglected, dishes unwashed. What are ways in which you neglect your home or living space (at least three examples)?

4. Work Chaos at work is risky for recovery. Signs of chaotic behavior are phone calls not returned within twenty-four hours, chronic lateness for appointments, being behind in promised work, an unmanageable in-basket, and "too many irons in the fire." When your life is unmanageable at work, what are your behaviors (at least three examples)?

5. Interests What are some positive interests besides work which give you perspective on the world? Music, reading, photography, fishing, and gardening are examples. What are you neglecting to do when you are overextended (at least three examples)?

6. Social Life Think of friends in your social network who constitute significant support for you and are not family or significant others. When you become isolated, alienated, or disconnected from them, what behaviors are typical of you (at least three examples)?

7. Family/Significant Others When you are disconnected from those closest to you, what is your behavior like (at least three examples)? Examples are silent, overtly hostile, and passive-aggressive.

8. Finances We handle our financial resources much as we do our emotional ones. Thus, when your checking account is unbalanced, or worse, overdrawn, or bills are overdue, or there is no cash in your pocket, or you are spending more than you earn, your financial overextension may parallel your emotional bankruptcy. List the signs that show when you are financially overextended (at least three examples).

9. Spiritual Life and Personal Reflection Spirituality can be diverse and can include such practices as meditation, yoga, and prayer. Personal reflection includes keeping a personal journal, working the Twelve Step program with daily readings, and getting therapy. What sources of routine personal reflection do you neglect when you are overextended (at least three examples)?

10. Other Addictions or Symptom Behaviors Compulsive behaviors that have negative consequences are symptomatic of your general well-being or the state of your overall recovery. When you watch inordinate amounts of TV, overeat, bite your nails—any habit you feel bad about afterward—these can be signs of burnout or possible relapse. Symptom behaviors are behaviors that are evidence of overextension, such as forgetfulness, slips of the tongue, and jealousy. What negative addiction or symptom behaviors are present when you are “on the edge” (at least three examples)?



Personal Crazyiness Index

Part Two—Recording Your PCI

The PCI is effective only when a careful record is maintained. Recording your daily progress in conjunction with regular journal keeping will help you to keep focused on priorities that keep life manageable; work on program efforts a day at a time; expand your knowledge of personal patterns; provide a warning in periods of vulnerability to self-destructive cycles or addictive relapse.

From the thirty or more signs of personal crazyiness you recorded, choose the seven that are most critical for you. At the end of each day, review the list of seven key signs and count the ones you did that day, giving each behavior one point. Record your total for that day in the space provided on the chart. If you fail to record the number of points for each day, that day receives an automatic score of 7. (If you cannot even do your score, you are obviously out of balance.) At the end of the week, total your seven daily scores and make an X on the graph. Pause and reflect on where you are in your recovery. Chart your progress over a twelve-week period.

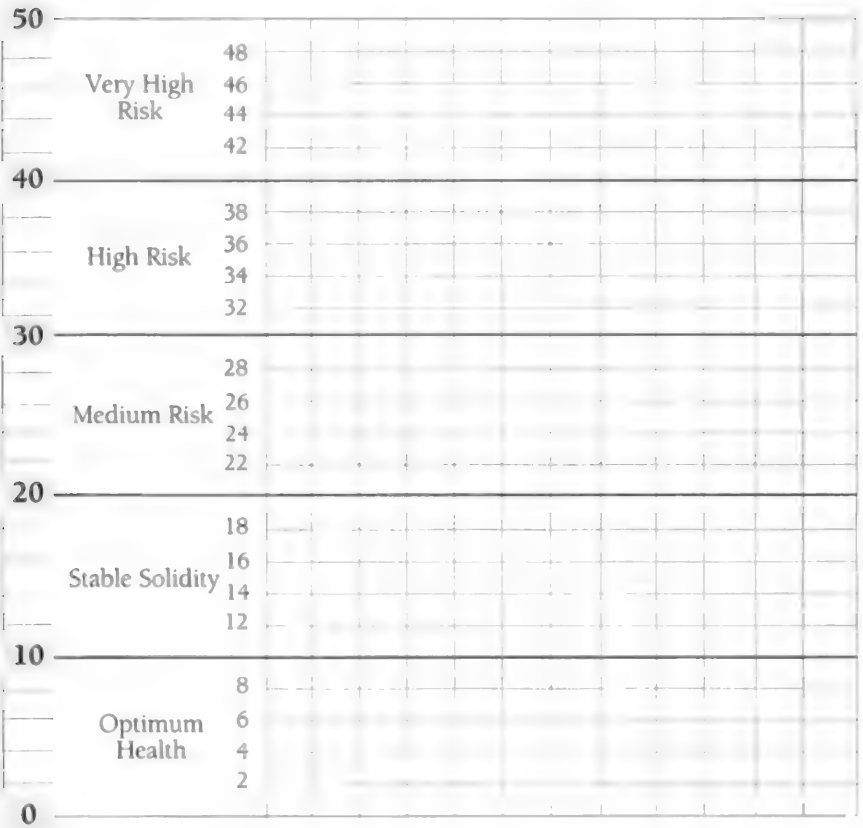
My seven key signs of personal crazyiness:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

PCI Chart

Day	Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Sunday													
Monday													
Tuesday													
Wednesday													
Thursday													
Friday													
Saturday													
Weekly Total													

PCI Graph



Interpretation of the PCI

A guideline for understanding your score is suggested below:

Optimum Health
0–9

Knows limits; has clear priorities; behavior congruent with values; rooted in diversity; supportive; has established a personal system; balanced, orderly, resolves crises quickly; capacity to sustain spontaneity; shows creative discipline.

Stable Solidity
10–19

Recognizes human limits; does not pretend to be more than he or she is; maintains most boundaries; well ordered; typically feels competent; feels supported; able to weather crisis.

Medium Risk
20–29

Slipping; often rushed; can't get it all in; no emotional margin for crisis; vulnerable to slip into old patterns; typically lives as if has inordinate influence over others and/or feels inadequate.

High Risk
30–39

Living in extremes (overactive or inactive); relationships abbreviated; feels and is irresponsible; constantly has reasons for not following through; lives one way, talks another; works hard to catch up.

Very High Risk
40–49

Usually pursuing self-destructive behavior; often totally into mission, cause or project; blames others for failures; seldom produces on time; controversial in community; success vs. achievement-oriented.



PCI Meditation

Use the PCI as a gentle nudge to move you in the direction you want to go. As addicts and coaddicts we can get compulsive and obsessive about almost anything—self-improvement included. One coaddict who uses *The Gentle Path* described her first attempt at using the PCI. She was determined to do it right and put her life in order—once and for all. Finances had always been her greatest area of shame, so she spent two days designing a complete budget. The computerized spreadsheet listed all her income and all the bills that would be paid on each payday for the next two years. This was a good attempt on her part to put her finances in order. Unfortunately, the two days she spent doing the budget were April 14 and 15. In spending all the time on her spreadsheets, she forgot to send in her taxes. To stay on the gentle path and yet work toward your goals, here is some advice:

- ✿ Choose to do the inventory for a specific amount of time, such as twelve weeks, or any time period that has a specific beginning and ending. After that time, review the process and decide to extend the time or do spot-check inventories each month, each quarter, or around holidays or significant anniversary dates. The thing we know about the inventory is that it modifies behavior. If you are going to have to report on yourself every night, you will find yourself behaving in a manner that will make it comfortable for you to report on yourself.
- ✿ Be patient with yourself. To change after years of compulsive behavior is a large task. Allow yourself the luxury of making mistakes. Even taking small steps toward balance provides a sense of satisfaction.
- ✿ Accept yourself. Remember your sense of humor. Be able to laugh at some of the situations that you find yourself in, but then go on and do what you can. Accept the imperfect.
- ✿ Working on your boundaries is a process—not a destination. Set those PCI parameters as boundaries of healthy behavior—a goal to work toward. Later, when those goals have been achieved, you will want to redo the PCI and set new parameters.

☛ **Talk to your recovering friends about your progress and your failures.** They will be your mirror to help you see when your compulsivity is getting out of control.

☛ **Understand that things will change.** There is as much challenge in trying to achieve balance as there was when we were constantly facing the chaos of living on the edge. The PCI is designed to give you a stable base so that when the unexpected comes up you won't be thrown off your balance.



When Crises Occur— Acknowledge the Chaos

Crises occur for all of us. And they seem to happen all at once, no matter how much effort we have put in. One night, flying home on a 727, I had several simultaneous crises happening. At thirty thousand feet there was little I could do. So I started to write down things I have learned about facing the inevitable crises in my life. Writing on the back of a plane ticket, I came up with fifteen action steps and five rules to remember:

Action Steps

1. Be gentle. It's an act of trust.
2. Trust yourself. Intuition is your brain working behind your back.
3. Get help. Sometimes things are too much.
4. Create space for yourself—use environment, time, and boundaries.
5. Cocoon yourself for transformation. Surviving is not enough.
6. Embrace your antagonists. Struggle, anger, and disagreements lead to renewal.
7. Admit mistakes, including the ones no one else would know.
8. Keep focused. Grandiosity works only for the messianic.
9. Stop doing things that don't work. Trying harder only creates shame.
10. Sustain your visions. You will become your images.
11. Avoid catastrophizing. A stranglehold on reality helps you, as well as others.
12. Finish things now. Incomplete transactions make for obsession.
13. Care for your body. It is the primary spiritual act.
14. Act to contain disasters. If too late, watch.
15. Plan for surprises. Only victims are surprised.

Rules to Remember

1. Fairness is not an issue. Reality is.
2. Fights and problems that repeat mean trouble. The issue is probably not the issue.
3. Blaming others is self-indulgent. Integrity exists only in self-responsibility.
4. Have hobbies. Competing passions maintain life balance.
5. Crises are. That's all.

Reflections on the Sixth and Seventh Steps

Beyond a wholesome discipline,
be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the
stars; you have a right to be here.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is
unfolding as it should.

—Desiderata

Reflect on the words above and think of what gentleness you need
for yourself at this point. While you turn over your imperfections, it
helps to remember your goodness and acknowledge the higher order.

Record your thoughts here:



Step Eight



Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Dr. Seuss explains a Ninth Step in *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. We have paraphrased the story here:

They still talk about it in the kingdom of Didd as “The-Year-the-King-Got-Angry-with-the-Sky.” You see, in the King’s grandiosity, he had decided that he was tired of the same four things coming down from the sky: snow, fog, sunshine, and rain. He wanted something NEW to come down from the sky. And he had his way. He got what he wanted when he wanted it. He called his spooky magicians, and with magic words they made it happen. It rained oobleck! Green, gooey, molassesey stuff that stuck to everyone and wouldn’t let go. The entire kingdom was paralyzed. Birds stuck to their nests, the royal musicians stuck to their instruments, the bell to warn the citizens was silenced by the green, yucky stuff. And the king sat on his throne, his royal crown stuck to his royal head.

Finally, Bartholomew Cubbins could hold his tongue no longer. “It’s going to keep on falling,” he shouted, “until your whole great marble palace tumbles down! So don’t waste your time saying foolish magic words. YOU ought to be saying some plain, simple words!”

“Simple words? What do you mean, boy?”

"I mean," said Bartholomew, "this is all your fault! Now, the least you can do is say the simple words, 'I'm sorry.'"

No one had ever talked to the king like this before.

"What!" he bellowed. "ME . . . ME say 'I'm sorry!' Kings never say 'I'm sorry!'"

"But you're sitting in oobleck up to your chin. And so is everyone else in your land. And if you won't even say you're sorry, you're no sort of king at all!"

But then Bartholomew heard a great, deep sob. The old King was crying! "You're right! It is all my fault! And I am sorry! I'm awfully, awfully sorry!"

And the moment the King spoke those words, something happened.

Maybe there was magic in those simple words "I'm sorry."

Maybe there was magic in those simple words "It's all my fault."

Maybe there was, and maybe there wasn't. But they say that as soon as the old King spoke them, the sun began to shine and all the oobleck that was stuck on all the people and on all the animals of the Kingdom of Didd just simply, quietly melted away.

Saying "I'm sorry" is difficult, so we have developed several tools to help you through your Eighth and Ninth Steps.

Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made A list is included to help you identify those you have harmed and how they were harmed.

The Healer Within This guided imagery is designed to help you tap your inner resources for the wisdom and strength to heal yourself.

Affirmations Affirmations will gently remind you of your strength for your Eighth and Ninth Step journey.

Meditation This meditation will help enhance your ability to choose a new future and give you the inner discernment you need to walk the gentle path of recovery.

Besides asking for help from your Higher Power for your shortcomings, you can act on your own to mend the harm you have caused as part of your illness. In Step Eight you identify people harmed, and in Step Nine you actually make the amends necessary. When finished with Step Nine, you will have done all you can and can turn over any remaining shame and guilt. The principles of forgiveness and restitution will become an ongoing part of living your life.

Reflecting on all levels of your awareness is very important to a thorough Eighth Step. When making your list of the persons you have harmed, consider the following:

☛ **The name of the person who has been harmed.** Don't concentrate only on those people who are closest to you. Harm was done in casual relationships and acquaintanceships, as well.

☛ **Memories of harm done.** Record the specifics that you remember about the harm, including your behavior and the other person's reactions. Include facial expressions, tones of voice, circumstances, or anything that will make clear what happened.

☛ **Thoughts about the harm.** Ask yourself what you think about the situation now. Do you have reflections or interpretations about the harm?

☛ **Feelings about the harm.** Acknowledge the pain, anger, shame, guilt, and fear that you have about the situation now. Also ask yourself what feelings you have about attempting to repair the damage.

☛ **Intentions you now have.** Perhaps the hardest part is to determine what you hope to accomplish by doing some repair work. Sometimes our intentions are not helpful. If, for example, your intent is to look good to others, you probably need to take a longer look at your motives.

☛ **Amends you can make for the harm caused.** Name specific actions that will make up for what happened. Sometimes that may mean simply saying "I'm sorry." You will find some situations for which nothing can be done. For example, you have no idea how to reach someone, and the only amend you can make is to live your life differently. In some situations, further contact might cause further harm. At least you will be able

to integrate that fact into your self-awareness. At the conclusion, you will have a list of all the amends you are willing to make. You will also have some blank spaces when it comes to amends.

As you can see, this will be a lengthy, difficult, soul-searching process that requires creativity and courage. Your guides can be important here. By reviewing your process as you go along, your guides can help you stay in reality. Their reactions to certain events may differ from yours, or they may challenge your intentions or suggest alternative actions. Remember, these amends do not have to be done all at once. You deserve time to think and to feel the process through. Again, gentleness is your goal.

The next several pages provide a worksheet for you to use. On the far right is a space labeled "Date." As you make each amend, record the date it was completed. By updating the column, you will know exactly where you are on your Ninth Step. Entering the dates will remind you to call your guides and update them as well.



Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made

Person:

Memories of Harm

Thoughts

Feelings

Intentions

Amends

Date:

Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made *(continued)*

Person: _____

Memories of Harm _____

Thoughts _____

Feelings _____

Intentions _____

Amends _____

Date: _____

Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made *(continued)*

Person: _____

Memories of Harm _____

Thoughts _____

Feelings _____

Intentions _____

Amends _____

Date: _____

Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made *(continued)*

Person: _____

Memories of Harm _____

Thoughts _____

Feelings _____

Intentions _____

Amends _____

Date: _____

Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made *(continued)*

Person: _____

Memories of Harm _____

Thoughts _____

Feelings _____

Intentions _____

Amends _____

Date: _____

Record of Those Harmed and Amends Made *(continued)*

Person: _____

Memories of Harm _____

Thoughts _____

Feelings _____

Intentions _____

Amends _____

Date: _____



The Healer Within

We all have untapped reserves of energy within us. We can learn to draw upon that strength. In non-Western cultures, the Healer is an integrating force in the life of its community and individuals. These Healers have several responsibilities, not just the healing of the sick. If we look at their responsibilities and then mirror them within ourselves, we may draw upon healing forces we did not know we possessed. We all have a Healer Within. We also have a Child Within that needs to be cared for, guided, and nurtured so that it can just be. Read the following descriptions of what Healers do, what your Healer Within does, and what your Child Within needs.

What Healers do

Healers mobilize belief. They tap those sources of energy that have not been available to individuals by themselves.

What your Healer Within does

Learns to trust intuition. Believes in self.

What your Child Within does

Preserves its innocence.

What Healers do

Healers release energy. With enthusiasm or charisma they are a catalyst and motivating force.

What your Healer Within does

Gathers energy to itself to mobilize.

What your Child Within does

Releases the energy in play.

What Healers do

They make sense out of the chaos.

What your Healer Within does

Protects itself from the chaos by creating boundaries.

What your Child Within does

Lives in safety.

What Healers do

Healers provide wisdom.

What your Healer Within does

Accesses your own wisdom. Some ways to do this are journaling, meditating, and imaging solutions.

What your Child Within does

Seeks guidance.

What Healers do

They convene community. They bind others in community by uniting people with a feeling of belonging.

What your Healer Within does

Builds community by organizing, participating, or reaching out.

What your Child Within does

Needs to belong to a community.

What Healers do

Healers use symbols and metaphors to teach and help others understand.

What your Healer Within does

Discovers symbols and metaphors. Makes the connections and understands the analogies.

What your Inner Child does

Inherits the metaphors, symbols, and understanding.

What Healers do

Healers are the storytellers. By preserving traditions, they anchor individuals in their community and place in history.

What your Healer Within does

Acknowledges your story, your epoch, and your place in history.

What your Child Within does

Gets to be the hero of the story.

What Healers do

Healers provide care.

What your Healer Within does

Nurtures the self.

What your Child Within does

Accepts nurturing.

What Healers do

Healers channel the spiritual.

What your Healer Within does

Accesses the spiritual—the presence of God within.

What your Child Within does

Is present to the world and to emotions. Being present is a spiritual act.

What Healers do

Healers lead the collective process.

What your Healer Within does

Becomes a partner, a participant, in the process.

What your Child Within does

Is allowed to be vulnerable and surrender to the process.

What Healers do

Often Healers are wounded themselves. Healing their own brokenness gave them the wisdom to heal others.

What your Healer Within does

Attends and heals your wounds and brokenness.

What your Child Within does

Is allowed to acknowledge suffering and admit pain.

What Healers do

Healers witness the truth.

What your Healer Within does

Discerns truth. Recognizes falsehood for what it is.

What your Child Within does

Speaks and lives the truth.

When we call upon the Healer Within, we have a powerful resource for healing our Child Within. The Healer Within becomes a protector and champion to our Child Within. It allows the Child Within to preserve its innocence. It allows it to play, feel safe, seek guidance, and accept the desire to belong to its community. The Child Within inherits the heroic epics, stories, and metaphors that interpret inner chaos and provide wisdom. The Healer Within allows the Child to trust in its own spirituality by being present to the world, acknowledging suffering and pain, and speaking the truth. The Healer Within allows the Child Within to accept nurturing and not fear being vulnerable.



Meditation

The following meditation is designed to help you visualize your Healer Within for the Child Within. You may choose to read it into a tape recorder and play it back, or have someone read it aloud to you. Pause for ten to fifteen seconds where indicated, or turn off the tape recorder, before continuing.

Find a nice, comfortable position.

If you are feeling anything emotionally distressing, picture yourself putting it in a box and setting it aside until the meditation is over. [pause]

Get in touch with your own bodily rhythms, your breathing, your heart rate. With each breath you take, each beat of your heart, you are participating in the larger rhythms of the universe. Each of those beats, each of those rhythms, has a sacredness to it because it is part of the forces of the universe. [pause]

Imagine that you are lying in a meadow on a summer day. You can feel the sun on your body. You feel very, very peaceful. You can hear the birds singing, smell the flowers and the grasses of the field. [pause]

You feel beckoned, as if you are being asked to go somewhere. You hear a voice calling you. You gently sit up. You look around. At the end of the meadow is a road. You know that road is where you need to go. You get up and walk to the road at the edge of the meadow. You walk down the road. As you walk, you come around the corner to a lake where there is a beach. There a child is playing in the sand on the beach. [pause]

As you approach, you see something familiar about that child. You leave the road. As you come closer, you see that the child is you at

the age of five. This is what you looked like. This is who you were at the age of five. You get down on your knees and look at the child at the child's level, and you ask the child how the child is doing.

What does the child say to you? [pause]

Walk with the child. Invite the child to come along with you on your journey. Reach out and offer the child your hand. Ask the child to join you. The two of you leave the beach and go on down the road. [pause]

As you walk down the road, you come to some large hills at the base of a mountain. Up on one of the hills is a large, sanctuary-like building. You and the child approach the building. There is a long flight of stairs in front of the building. As the two of you come to the flight of stairs, a man and a woman walk out. They are so peaceful looking. They say, "Come, we have been waiting for you." You and the child walk up the stairs, and the man and the woman each take your hands and say, "We're so glad you are here."

Now they invite you in. They say to you, "We want to take you to what we call the room of vision." They guide you into a room with multicolored glass in the ceiling and skylights. There is no furniture, but a soft, spongy floor and four walls. [pause]

Your guides ask you to sit down. They explain to you that the room of visions is a way to have windows into your life.

The woman guide turns to your child and asks, "What is hurting you?" [pause] "How do you hurt right now?" [pause]

What does your child say to the woman right now? [pause]

The man turns to you and asks, "What is troubling you?" [pause]

What do you say to the man? [pause]

Then the woman explains, "We brought you here because we know you are troubled and we believe that there are things you already know that can help. Each wall to this room contains a vision. Two of the walls have visions of your future. Let's look at the first one."

The wall dissolves and there is an image of your future. You are watching you in your own future. What is this image about? [pause] What is happening in your future? [pause] What do you see? [pause] How do you react to this vision of the future? [pause] Look at your child. How is your child reacting to this vision from the future? [pause] The man says to you, "Now, remember, you can choose whether you want this in your future. Make a decision."

Look at your child. Is the child comfortable? [pause] Look at the future. Do you want this as part of your future? [pause] Make your decision and, as you decide, watch as the wall goes blank.

The guides then point to another wall. It dissolves and another vision comes out of your future. What is happening in this vision? [pause] What are you doing? [pause] Who are you with? [pause] How does it look like you are feeling in this future? [pause] How do you feel watching it? [pause] How does your child feel? [pause] Look at your child. How is your child reacting to it? [pause]

The woman says to you, "Now, again you can make a decision. Is this what you want?" [pause] "Is this what you want in your future?" [pause] "Choose." As you make your decision, the wall becomes opaque again. [pause]

The man guide says, "Behind the third wall are gifts. The child is to go first." The wall dissolves, and there is a gift waiting there for the child. What is the gift? [pause] "This is a spiritual gift," the man says. "Have your child go and get the gift and then come back and sit down on the soft, warm floor."

As you look up, your other guide says, "There is a gift in there for

you, a spiritual gift. Let it be a symbol for you." What is the gift? [pause] What does it look like? [pause] What characteristics does it have? [pause] Get up and walk over to the gift. Pick it up and bring it back.

Behind the fourth wall, your guide says, "Picture an animal that you think is like you. An animal that can have special significance." Your child goes first. What animal appears for your child? [pause] Your guide asks, "How are you like this animal?" [pause] "In what ways are you like this animal?" [pause]

Now it is your turn. What animal fits for you? [pause] The wall dissolves and you can picture that animal. What is it like? [pause] How are you like that animal? [pause] What characteristics does it have that are like you? [pause]

Your guide says, "Let these animals serve as symbols for you of what you are about. Learn about them. Study them. They will teach you what you need to know."

You and your guides rise and you walk out of the building, into a garden, and down the stairs. You sit down next to your child. Spend a little time now, talking to that child. What do the Healers say to that child? [pause] What did you learn? [pause] How can you use the gifts? [pause] What about the future? Talk to the child. [pause]

As you finish the conversation, take the child's hand and walk back to the beach.

Promise your child that you will let your child play, but that you will leave now. Whenever that child needs you, you will be back. Promise that the Healer Within you will always be there for the child. [pause]

As you walk away, back towards the meadow, you are aware that something has shifted. Something will never be the same. You feel steadier. You trust yourself. You are more peaceful. Sturdier. As you lay down in the meadow, you can feel the presence of the moment,

how you blend into the earth, embracing it. You decide to rest, and you go to sleep.

When you are ready to finish the fantasy, awake and arise slowly and peacefully. Hold onto the feelings of your imagery.

Healing is a matter of nurture, comfort, story, images, and personal connection. There are times when the child needs the healer, but there are also times when the healer needs the playfulness of the child. Metaphors are another way to get at your reality. If someone told you to play more, that you have the capability, it wouldn't be very effective. But if you can image yourself as an animal playing, or the child playing, it becomes believable to you on a conscious level. The visualization you just completed is a metaphor. Describe your images and thoughts during the process.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Affirmations

Affirmations can help us change our behavior. We can replace unhealthy messages that we did not choose with healthy messages we select. Each affirmation is written in the present—as if you are already accomplishing it. Even though it may not be a reality for you today, you need to “act as if.” It may be difficult, but think of it as planting a garden with possibilities that will bloom with wonderful realities.

Select from the list the affirmations that have meaning for you, and add some of your own. Read them each day or as you need them. Place the list of affirmations on your mirror and repeat them while you are shaving or putting on your makeup. Keep a copy in the car to repeat while commuting, or record them on a tape and let the tape tell them to you right before you fall asleep.

I take responsibility for my part in my interpersonal relationships.

I am ruthlessly honest in determining my part in a relationship that has been damaged.

I can restore my own integrity by being willing to change, to disclose secrets, create new boundaries, be discerning in understanding systems, be willing to finish things, be open to new relationships and take responsibility.

I am willing to look honestly at my sexual relationships. I acknowledge that as a sexual being, my sexuality is an integral part of my recovery. I apply honesty and spirituality to healing the sexual part of my life.

I am open to the spiritual healing of the amends process. Whatever the outcome of my attempt, I will take pride in trying to make my amend.

*I ask for guidance in choosing whether to make an amend.
With this guidance, I will not hurt myself or anyone further.*

*I am open to the lessons that I can learn from making
amends, and I am grateful for them.*

Reflections on the Eighth and Ninth Steps

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past or wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Alcoholics Anonymous—The “Big Book”

These are the famous promises of the program. Reflect on completing your Eighth and Ninth Steps.

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Guides: What examples of the promises at work do you see in the life of this workbook owner?

Record your reactions here:

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Guide name: _____

Date: _____



Step Ten



Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step Ten asks you to integrate the program principles of honesty and spiritual exploration into your daily life. By now you will have noticed that the program asks you at different points to be a list maker. Making lists becomes one way for you to develop personal awareness. Daily monitoring of the realities of your strengths and limitations plus a willingness to acknowledge your failings and successes is the surest path to sanity. From the beginning of this workbook we have emphasized balance, focus, and self-responsibility. Applying those concepts to Step Ten we see

Balance Acknowledging strengths and limitations.

Focus Taking a daily personal inventory.

Self-responsibility Acknowledging successes and failures promptly.

This commitment to integrity lays the foundation for active spirituality. Conversely, such rigorous ongoing self-examination can be sustained only with a strong spiritual base—Step Eleven. The combination of the two becomes a way of life for program people. The spiritual component grows through daily readings, meditation, prayer, and journal writing.

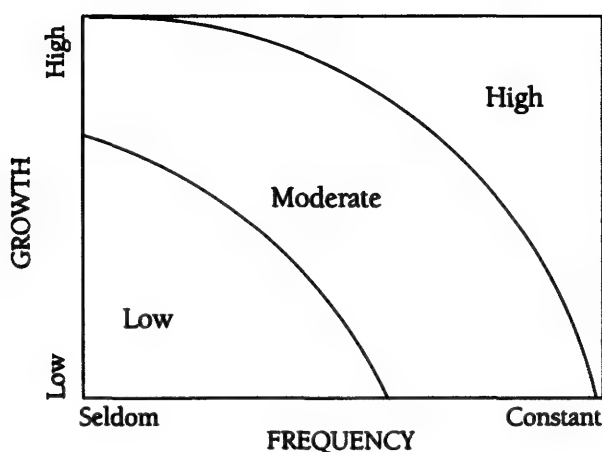


Figure 2 Impact of Recovery

By maintaining this balance, focus, and self-responsibility, recovering people create an “open system” that grows and adapts. This contrasts with the “closed” (rigid, judgmental) and the chaotic (random, purposeless) systems of addiction and coaddiction. Making lists, doing Step work, keeping a journal, attending workshops, and participating in therapy and treatment are all examples of recovery activities that help expand our awareness and growth. A growing system stays in balance.



Balanced Equations

A Ten-Day Exercise for Steps Ten and Eleven

In the following exercise, ten equations are provided that represent the essential, but delicate, balance we all need in our lives. The first equation, the happiness equation, is taken from Dan Milan's *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, which served as the inspiration for the exercise. These equations are illustrations of the relative components of these key recovery issues:

Happiness

Growth

Serenity

Peace of mind

Reality

Achievement

Intimacy

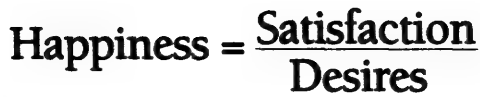
Productivity

Health

Spirituality

Use each equation as a daily meditation upon imbalances in your life. Record your reflections, and then compose a prayer for each day, a prayer that helps you strike a balance. Stay in the moment. Describe thoughts and feelings that are present for you today.

At the end of the ten days, have a discussion with your guides about what process you would like to develop and use to maintain your conscious contact with God. Spirituality is fundamentally a personal and dynamic process. In addition to daily meditation and prayer, your plan to keep your connection to your Higher Power may include any practices—from helping others to sitting by a stream—that work for you. The exercises in the next section can help you achieve the balance you need to stay spiritually centered.



Happiness exists when what you want is matched by what you have. If your desires are few, they are easy to satisfy.

Reflection

254 Step Ten

Prayer

[illegible]



$$\text{Growth} = \frac{\text{Change}}{\text{Stability}}$$

Day Two

Systems need to change or they die. Change is an essential ingredient to growth. Change without a stable foundation, however, leads to chaos. Any recovery program has elements of change as well as elements of stability.

Do you have a stable foundation to support your growth? Are you afraid to risk change, remaining stuck where you are?

Reflection

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Prayer

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



$$\text{Serenity} = \frac{\text{Boundaries}}{\text{Options}}$$

Day Three

Addicts and coaddicts live in the extremes, which means they can take any option to an excess. Imposing limits in the form of boundaries creates balance. The Serenity Prayer epitomizes this principle by praying for courage “to change the things I can.”

Do you pursue all your possibilities without any limits? Are you too caring, too helpful, too involved, too committed, too generous?

Reflection

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This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Peace of Mind = $\frac{\text{Known to Others}}{\text{Known to Self}}$

Day Four

Anxiety originates in secrets about yourself that others do not know. Worry about others discovering the truth destroys your peace of mind. When there are others in your life who know all there is to know, you can be peaceful and stop living in terror of another abandonment.

Are you living in fear because of untold secrets? Have you lied to people because you wanted to avoid conflict or hurting someone? Do you have friends you can confide your fear to?

Reflection

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$$\text{Reality} = \frac{\text{Light Side}}{\text{Dark Side}}$$

Day Five

Reality is acknowledging both your strengths and your weaknesses. To focus only on your failures distorts reality. To see only the successes equally blurs your vision. Both need to be full—not partially—acknowledged and accepted.

Do you have more difficulty admitting strengths or weaknesses? Do you fully admit that you have both?

Reflection

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Prayer

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Achievement = $\frac{\text{Vision}}{\text{Plan}}$

Day Six

Genuine achievement combines both an image of what needs to be done and a concrete plan of action to get the tasks done. A plan without vision goes nowhere. A vision without concrete action never becomes reality. Part of thinking “a day at a time” is to break a dream down into little pieces that can be done a “piece” at a time.

Do you procrastinate about taking action on your ideas? Do you think about what you want to do before you act? Do you break big dreams into daily, doable pieces?

Reflection

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Prayer

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Intimacy = $\frac{\text{Fidelity to Others}}{\text{Fidelity to Self}}$

Day Seven

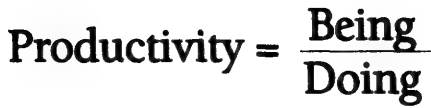
Ultimately, intimacy exists because of trust. When fidelity to yourself matches faithfulness to others, trust occurs. People who report clearly their own needs, boundaries, and feelings are trustworthy. You can predict—or trust—what they will do. If you are accountable to others, people will feel safe being close to you.

Do you compromise yourself or give in too easily and then get mad? Do you say yes when you really want to say no? Do you follow through on your promises? Can people trust you enough to be intimate?

Reflection

Prayer

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



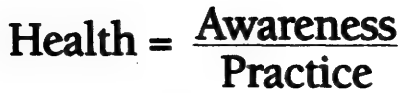
Truly productive people take time to re-create themselves by doing nothing. Stopping to enjoy all that is around you is essential to renewing your energy. What you do needs to be matched by times of simply being.

Reflection

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Prayer

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



As a recovering person, you need to take greater responsibility for your health. This means that you need to learn about it and develop your awareness. Your awareness must be matched by action. Do you do what you know you should?

Reflection

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Prayer

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Spirituality = $\frac{\text{Mortality}}{\text{Meaning}}$

Day Ten

Spirituality starts with understanding your own human limitations, beginning with your mortality. Given those limits, you need to explore what meaning they have for you. Philosophical speculation without the reality of your human limits has no foundation and quickly becomes irrelevant. Daily life becomes pointless and without a sense of higher purpose.

Do you live each day as if it were your last? Did you find time today to address your priorities?

Reflection

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Prayer

[illegible]



Daily Tenth Step Inventory

Using the equations as reminders, each day mentally review these areas of your life as a Tenth Step inventory.

- ☛ **Happiness** Did you balance satisfaction with desires?
- ☛ **Growth** Did you balance your need for stability with what is healthy, new, and different?
- ☛ **Serenity** Did you balance your possibilities with your limitations?
- ☛ **Peace of Mind** Did you take the risk to not keep secrets from those you trust?
- ☛ **Reality** Did you list the strengths and weaknesses that you demonstrated today?
- ☛ **Achievement** Did you plan or act on your vision for yourself today?
- ☛ **Intimacy** Did you find balance between your boundaries and accountability to others?
- ☛ **Productivity** Was there balance between what you accomplished and moments of peace for you today?
- ☛ **Health** What did you do today to take care of your body?
- ☛ **Spirituality** What action did you take today to touch a sense of your higher purpose and your own humanity?



Affirmations

Affirmations help us change our behavior. Read the following into a tape recorder and listen to the person you are now and are becoming. Pause a few seconds between each affirmation.

I create my own happiness by allocating my resources to achieve those things that give me satisfaction.

I have a firm foundation of stability in several areas of my life that allows me to positively change to continue my growth in recovery.

The options I select and the boundaries I establish give me serenity.

My peace of mind comes from trusting my intimate circle with my reality.

I accept my strengths and weaknesses, my good and bad choices that help me through the gray of reality.

Vision creates the purpose and direction for my life. I achieve my purpose with planning and execution—one piece at a time.

Trust in myself and in others allows me intimacy.

My productivity is maximized when I accomplish tasks and spend time re-creating myself.

I perform healthful practices out of respect and reverence for my body's needs.

Each moment in my day holds an opportunity to give my life higher meaning by how I choose to live it.

Create affirmations that are meaningful to you:

Reflections on the Tenth and Eleventh Steps

We must always hold truth, as best we can determine it, to be more important, more vital to our self-interest, than our comfort. Conversely, we must always consider our personal discomfort relatively unimportant and, indeed, even welcome it in the service or the search for truth. Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs...What does a life of total dedication to truth mean? It means, first of all, a life of continuous and never ending stringent self-examination.

—M. Scott Peck, M.D.
The Road Less Traveled

Reflect on the words of Scott Peck and think of your daily meditation and prayer practices. Do they help you maintain conscious contact with your Higher Power? Do they help you with your ongoing personal inventory?

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Guides: What do you see happening on a daily basis in the life of this workbook owner?

Share your insights, feelings, and suggestions here:

[illegible]

Guide name: _____

Date: _____



Step Eleven



Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we *understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Spiritual renewal has many forms. Throughout the *Gentle Path* series we have suggested a variety of strategies and daily activities. Those suggestions certainly fit the intention of Step Eleven. Sometimes we need to make an extraordinary effort, especially if we are in need of direction in our lives. Spirituality is simply another level of “knowing” or finding. Often this takes the form of a journey or quest. To undertake such a spiritual quest, you will need to make special preparations. Here are suggestions for what you might need:

A dream journal. Buy yourself a book with blank pages. As you plan and prepare for this quest, keep a log of all dreams you remember, even if they are only fragments. If you have trouble remembering your dreams, keep a tape recorder by your bed. Transcribe the dreams in the morning. Record the day, the dream, and the feelings you had as part of the dream. Dreams bear important messages from within ourselves. While on your quest, your dream log may become very important to you.

A seeking place. Select a time when you will be undisturbed, such as during a weekend, series of weekends, week, month—whatever you can manage to dedicate to your spiritual quest. This time should be when you can lay daily demands aside and not be distracted by family, friends, job, or other factors.

A guiding metaphor. Look for an analogy or metaphor for this time of your life. Survivors of child abuse, for example, often use the turtle. They notice how the ways of the turtle can be helpful. Turtles are survivors of eons of evolution; they evolved a tough shell to protect vul-

nerable parts; they pursue a deliberate pace on land but allow themselves grace in the open seas; and they know how to pull in to avoid harm. Find a metaphor or analogy that can help you think about this time.

A collection of sacred things. Native Americans have the concept of a medicine bundle. Recovering people use the concept of a “God box.” Whatever term you use, gather together things of special significance to you that symbolize empowered moments of your life. Program medallions, sponsor gifts—collect anything that will help you connect with your own spiritual roots.

A spiritual mentor. Based upon their own experience, a spiritual director or holy person can help you. Whether it be the exercises of St. Ignatius or the Vision Quest of the Sioux, holy persons help prepare you for the quest. They support you during the experience. They debrief you later to help you understand your experiences. They are special guides for this time.

Usually a quest takes months of preparation and lots of coaching from the spiritual mentor. Sometimes there are readings to be done, information to be gathered, or special materials to be found. There is no magic in this preparation. It is simply preparing yourself.

During the actual quest, take care to journal your experiences. Share them only with your spiritual guide. Allow time from daily living with your guide to process this retreat. We have included a planning sheet for you to think about your quest. We have provided space for your guide to memorialize whatever reactions he or she had.

Blessings on your effort!



Spiritual Quest Planning Sheet

Complete the following in preparation for your quest.

1. What is the “seeking place” you will use?

2. When is your “seeking time?”

3. What metaphors will you use?

4. What special, sacred thing do you wish to bring with you?

5. Who will serve as your spiritual mentor?

6. What special instructions does your spiritual mentor suggest?



Date: _____

Dear _____,

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Step Twelve



Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

As this edition of *The Gentle Path* is being prepared, a community of fifty men is struggling with denial and acceptance, seeking sobriety and a definition of spirituality that they can understand, and a chance—perhaps only a slim one—not to die from the side effects of their drug and sexual addiction. These men live in a community called Jericho. Like its namesake, Jericho has walls—walls that keep 4,500 other prisoners out. Jericho is an addiction and drug rehabilitation center in a Pennsylvania prison. Because of the rampant drug and sex addiction there, AIDS is also widespread. For these men, becoming—and staying—clean and sober literally means they may not have to die in prison from AIDS.

Jericho is only one of the millions of reasons Twelve Step work is so important. We may never really know if a talk we give at an open meeting or in a detox center actually changed someone's life. We may not always see the impact we make on the person we sponsor or on how that person's experience helps someone else. Sharing your recovery with others is like making a ripple in a lake. Maybe one of the people you touch, who then touches another, will make a difference in someone's sobriety.

Oh, yes, one of the million reasons to do Twelve Step work is so you stay sober.

Helping others is a significant part of the program, and there are many ways the program gets passed on. When you live the program and share it with others, you are carrying the message, especially when you sponsor new members. In practicing the Twelfth Step you will find that

• By witnessing to others, your appreciation of the program and the program's impact on your life deepens.

• By hearing the stories of new members, you are reminded of where you were when you started.

☛ By modeling to others, you become aware that you need to practice what you preach.

☛ By giving to others, you develop bonds with new people who really need you.

☛ By helping others, you give what you have received.

☛ By supporting new beginnings, you revitalize your own efforts.

Being a sponsor sounds intimidating, but there are only a few things you need to do:

☛ Work hard to understand the whole story of the person you are sponsoring.

☛ Give emotional support to the person you are sponsoring during those difficult times.

☛ Help the person you are sponsoring to focus on the basics of your particular program.

☛ Help the person you are sponsoring to focus on the Steps of the program.

In your relationships with those you sponsor, you will be finding good things about them that they overlook. (Remember when all you could find to report to your sponsor was the latest disaster?) You will work hard to help new members see what it is they are doing right. Addicts and coaddicts, by definition, see only the bad in themselves. Perhaps the most priceless gifts a sponsor can give are those beginning affirmations.

As a sponsor, you serve as a special role model. How you work your program will have a significant impact on those you help. To bolster your confidence, have your guides share their reactions to your being a sponsor using the space provided on page 288.

You also need to be very clear about your own definition of sobriety. To review that again will help you be more clear with the person you

are sponsoring. No doubt your understanding of your sobriety has evolved since those early days when you told the group what you would not do. The sobriety worksheet provided reflects the old Buddhist axiom that wisdom is being able to say yes as well as no. In sobriety terms, this means that recovery is more than abstinence from self-destructive behavior. It is also a positive statement about what you embrace.

Much of this has probably been clear to you for some time, but recording and discussing your personal standards of sobriety with your own guides will be helpful to you and those you are about to help.

Remember, your path is gentle. You can get help in learning to help others. Your Higher Power will be with you.



Twelfth Step Guide Affirmations

The purpose of this page is for your guides to affirm you and your suitability to help others on the gentle path.

Note to guides and friends: As you list affirmations, the more specific you can be, the more helpful the affirmations will be.

Example: You are one of the best listeners I know. —S.K.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____



Sobriety Worksheet

Now that you have come this far along the gentle path, it's time to create a sobriety worksheet to keep your recovery on course. This worksheet will be an exceptionally valuable tool to use as a reference guide in the weeks and months to come. Review it regularly.

Here are the basic directions with some very simple examples:

1. Specify a list of concrete sobriety boundaries in the list provided on page 292.

Example: No use of alcohol or other drugs.

2. List specific behaviors that could jeopardize or endanger your ability to preserve your boundary.

Example: Boundaries—Drinking any alcohol. Smoking pot. Danger Zones—Getting too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Talking to my parents about certain touchy subjects.

3. Take each sobriety boundary and complete a sobriety worksheet for each one. Start by entering the boundary on the designated line. Record the last date of that behavior on the sobriety date line.

Example: Drinking alcohol. February 2, 1986

4. For each individual boundary, record the actual behaviors that would constitute a slip and require a revision of your sobriety date. Focus on those specific behaviors that were part of your addictive life. Record on the line labeled "Behaviors That Equal a Slip."

Example: Drinking beer at my favorite bar.

5. Next, list the behaviors that are not actual slips, but would detract from, or endanger, your sobriety. These are the behaviors that usually occurred before the actual addictive behavior. In other words, these are the things you usually did before a certain acting out or binge. Realizing this, you also know that these are potentially seductive behaviors and can lead you into a real danger zone. Record on the line labeled "Behaviors That Endanger Sobriety Boundary."

Example: Going to my favorite bar, but not drinking beer.

6. Fantasy is an integral part of the addictive experience. Whether excessive daydreaming, fantasizing, or actual trancelike preoccupations, these mental states are conducive to engaging in the old bad habits. Remembering that you alone know your obsessive thoughts and that only you are responsible for protecting your sobriety, list those fantasies that are unhealthy for you. Record on the line labeled "Fantasy."

Example: Reminiscing about good times and good beer at my favorite bar.

7. Finally, record those positive actions you now know will affirm or strengthen your sobriety boundaries. These behaviors will serve as survival action steps to help you through the difficult times that are bound to come on the path to sobriety and serenity. Don't forget to state what you will work for. Record on the line labeled "Action Step to Strengthen, Affirm Sobriety."

Example: When I begin thinking about going to my favorite bar, I will call my sponsor. I will schedule regular activities with good friends who don't drink.

My Personal Sobriety Boundaries

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Sobriety Worksheet

1

Sobriety Boundary

Sobriety Date

Behaviors That Equal a Slip

Behaviors That Endanger Sobriety

Fantasy

Action Step to Strengthen, Affirm Sobriety

2

Sobriety Boundary

Sobriety Date

Behaviors That Equal a Slip

Behaviors That Endanger Sobriety

Fantasy

Action Step to Strengthen, Affirm Sobriety

Sobriety Worksheet

3

Sobriety Boundary

Sobriety Date

Behaviors That Equal a Slip

Behaviors That Endanger Sobriety

Fantasy

Action Step to Strengthen, Affirm Sobriety

4

Sobriety Boundary

Sobriety Date

Behaviors That Equal a Slip

Behaviors That Endanger Sobriety

Fantasy

Action Step to Strengthen, Affirm Sobriety



Gifts of the Spirit

Sponsorship is only one of the ways Twelve Step work is done. One of the messages you carry in your journey is that of recovery. By your example, you will influence others, whether you intend to or not. If you have children, this is graphically clear. They rarely do what we say, but are sure to do what we do. Like snowflakes, we are all unique. We each possess our own unique combination of talents and inner strengths. We may not be aware of all of them just yet, but we are responsible for using them to the best of our ability. It is through these gifts that we can do our greatest Twelve Step work.

Becky, our office manager, is an example. Her inner strength is that she somehow makes order out of our chaos. Her talent is quilting. Her quilts are really works of art. They are also warm, cozy, and inviting. Her designs are so unique and artfully done that people receive comfort and enjoyment just by looking at them.

We all know people who allow us to feel emotions through their music; listeners who let us pour out our happiness or sadness and know how to make us feel cared for; those who have gifts of mathematical or scientific insight that help us make sense out of the unintelligible; wonderful cooks; great mechanics.... What are your gifts?

List your gifts of the spirit, your special talents and inner strengths:

(If you have trouble thinking of them, think of a time when you had great pleasure doing something. When someone said how meaningful or wonderful it was, you were surprised, maybe a little embarrassed. You had already received enjoyment for doing it and didn't expect others to enjoy it too.)

These gifts empower us. Perhaps within these gifts lies your vision, your mission. With the guidance of a Higher Consciousness, you can use them to make the dark places light.

Beginning Again...

Some things become obvious. By the third year of recovery, most of us learn to accept that “boring is okay.” One does not have to live in perpetual crisis. In the way we used to live, chaos was a way of life. Now we work to have reserves—emotional, financial, physical, and spiritual—so that when crises do occur, they do not throw us. We have the support we need.

However, it also becomes obvious that our lives are not problem free. In fact, some of the old issues re-emerge again and again. The difference is that now we have the understanding and the skills to avoid old self-destructive patterns. Most of us sooner or later say to ourselves, “I’m tired of growing,” or pray to God, “No more challenges, please!” So we search for balance between the forces in our lives, for stability and the forces for change.

Preserving that balance may bring us to a point where the program ceases to nurture us and becomes dry. How to generate new energy for program efforts is the challenge. Here are concrete actions you can take to revitalize your recovery.

Do Service Work For many, the ticket for making progress in recovery has been participating in the fellowship and organizational life. Service in a group or intergroup alters your perceptions and expands awareness dramatically. “Passing it on” really does make a difference.

Participate in National Events Most Twelve Step fellowships organize national conferences and retreats. For many, the effort it takes to participate is rewarded many times over. For some, attendance provides watershed-like experiences in their recovery.

Join Another Program Most of us qualify to participate in another fellowship. An alcoholic, for example, has codependency issues and could dramatically change his or her life by attending Al-Anon. Resistance occurs because one does not want to be a beginner again. Joining another fellowship, for many, is exactly what is needed.

Join a Couples Fellowship One of the most significant developments in the recovery groups has been the emergence of couples-

oriented fellowships such as Recovering Couples Anonymous or Chapter Nine. Many have reported that joining such a fellowship with a life partner enhanced recovery dramatically.

Change Formats Many groups have found that changing formats can renew group life. Individuals also can shift focus. Join a “write and share” meeting or a “spirituality-focused” group.

Explore Your Resistance Sometimes we resist continuing our program efforts because, if we continued to the next issue, it would be overwhelming. Sometimes the program becomes “dry” because we really do not want to deal with something. The question to ask is, What are we avoiding?

Reflections on the Twelfth Step

Denial is the hallmark of the immature, the insecure, the self-centered, the nonaffirmed. When Faust, the man who was willing to sell his soul to the devil and condemn himself to hell, asked his visitor who he was, Mephistopheles replied, "I am the spirit who always denies!"

—Conrad Baars, M.D.
Born Only Once

The Twelfth Step requires that you share your path with others. The joy of your sobriety and its life-giving reality are what you have to give. Denial is how you have lost your way in the past. Reflect on the quote above and think about how the Twelfth Step can maintain reality in your life. Think, too, about the contract between the gift you offer new members and the offer of Mephistopheles.

Getting This Far

Getting this far means you have worked very hard and have given many gifts to yourself. You have by now integrated Twelve Step principles into your core being, have changed your life dramatically, and have a rich community of friends. Let the workbook be a record of your transformation and a celebration of your courage.

There may come a time when you feel the need to revitalize your program. You may wish to complete the workbook again. People report that using these exercises at different times in their lives generated very different experiences. Feel free to repeat them. All you need is the desire, the courage, and some blank sheets of paper.

By now, you've probably realized that there is no finish line on the gentle path through the Twelve Steps. The Steps are a process—ongoing, regenerating, renewing. In recovery, as in life generally, there are always new challenges, and you will find, if you keep reaching out, plenty of friends along the way.

My congratulations! Welcome to the beginning of the rest of your journey.

Patrick J. Carnes
The Meadows
Wickenburg, Arizona



A Guide for Group Use

From the beginning, *The Gentle Path* was meant to be an evolving resource for Twelve Step study. Over the past three years, groups all across the country have been using the workbook in different ways, with different goals, and with different stories to tell. We have put together some of their suggestions on what worked and what didn't work for them, and we have made some changes to the book based on their comments. Here are some of the ways *The Gentle Path* was used within a group setting:

- It can be used as an introduction to how the Twelve Steps work. With a guide or sponsor, this book can help you understand what the Twelve Steps mean in your life.

- As a study guide for renewal groups, the book has helped those in recovery reach deeper levels of understanding.

- For those with multiple or secondary addictions, it is a tool for exploring other sides of one's addictive self.

- The book can be used in therapy groups or with a therapist.

- It can be used simply as a resource for help in presentation of a Step talk, the same way the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions have been used for years.

The important component of group accountability will help you continue progressing through the book. It will be the support and encouragement of other members of the group that will get you through the difficult parts and hold you accountable to yourself in your goal of study and growth.

Study Groups

Because every group brings its own expectations and experiences, each study group is unique. Here are some suggested variations:

✿ **Post Meeting Mini-Group** This is a smaller group that chooses to meet for an hour to an hour and a half after a main Twelve Step meeting. This has two distinct advantages. First, everyone in the group has already built a trust level from knowing each other in the main Twelve Step group. Second, it minimizes the nights away from spouses and the need for baby-sitters. By meeting in a smaller group, more in-depth work time can be spent on each individual.

✿ **Write-and-Share Meeting** In this format, one person writes a part of the assigned Step. At the meeting, this person shares what he or she has written, while the others in the group write their personal reflections on what the person has shared. Each member then takes a turn sharing reflections.

✿ **Focus Group** A focus group makes a commitment to use *The Gentle Path* as a study guide. They commit a specific number of months that they plan to work on it. These groups require a sincere commitment on each member's part. To develop the trust level that is needed, the group should be closed, meaning no new members will come into the group after its formation. They operate basically as a Write-and-Share meeting. One group of four women in Michigan took only one to three pages each week, and with everyone sharing they found a connectedness in their experiences. Others' comments became catalysts to their own thoughts and feelings. A group of six men in Texas found that it worked better for them to have one person report each week on larger sections of the book. Each member was responsible for giving feedback to the person reporting. Without having to worry about what they were going to say when their turn came, they could give that person their full attention. These groups develop a deep sense of community.

✿ **All-Day Self-Help Seminars** A group may decide to use *The Gentle Path* as the format for an all-day retreat or seminar. The format may have a presentation portion, use the workbook for the "homework," and provide structured time for sharing.

Variations

Individuals may choose to share the entire content of what they have written, or summarize their work if the group is particularly large.

It helps to bring in outside literature that pertains to the Step being worked on. One group told us that their entire group attended retreats and seminars that dealt with topics related to the Step they were working on.

Breaking bread together has always been a way of developing community. One group, determined not to get carried away, assigned a list of cold cuts, bread, condiments, chips, and refreshments and rotated who brought the ingredient for a sandwich meal every week. Another group confessed that it was comforting to have chocolate on the table when the Steps were really emotionally difficult. Some groups choose to go for coffee or lunch after meetings.

A group of young single parents pooled their money for one babysitter on Saturday mornings and brought their children with them to the church where they met. Their children had friends to play with while their parents worked the Step.

Groups with a diverse membership, or with members new to the Twelve Step program, may need greater structure in the meeting. Opening and closing rituals, like the Serenity Prayer, or readings from various meditation books, can be familiar and comforting. A “check-in” time can be allowed at the beginning of each meeting, giving everyone a chance to say, in two or three sentences, how they are feeling or what is going on with them.

Because all addicts and coaddicts have trouble with intimacy, one group chose to “practice” being open to intimacy by holding the meetings in different group members’ homes, rotating the site each month.

Time Limits

How long will the group meet? One hour or more? It helps to have the members agree on the length of the meeting and how many weeks or months each member is willing to commit. In-depth renewal groups have taken up to two-and-a-half years to complete the workbook. The group needs to reexamine its commitment from time to time, and recommit if necessary, to get the most out of the work.

The bonding that grows in *The Gentle Path* study groups is very deep, but it can delay the start of the meeting. One group allows fifteen minutes for everyone's friendly greetings and conversation before they begin the meeting.

Leadership

The group may choose to rotate leadership each week, month, or quarter. If only one person shares her work at a meeting, she may be the designated leader that week. The leadership method will vary with each group, but in the beginning it is important to have a group consensus. It may evolve and change without verbal discussion into what feels natural for the group. However, control can be abused or abdicated, so it is important to reexamine the group consensus from time to time.

Feedback

A group in Colorado recommended to us that groups spend some time initially hashing out agreed-upon suggestions for feedback. By doing this, the group gets to understand individual sensitivities, and it develops trust and a feeling of safety, particularly important because the First Step work requires such total exposure of one's inner secrets. The following are suggestions that this group worked out. Use them as a model only, and develop your own additional guidelines:

1. Only one person at a time speaks, uninterrupted, always.
2. Each speaker takes the floor by stating his or her name: "I'm Ann...." Although it sounds artificial, it makes it clear whose turn it is.
3. He or she has the floor until relinquishing it by saying something like "Thanks" or "That's all."
4. When the other members are sure that the speaker is finished, ask for permission to give feedback.
5. The speaker has the right to refuse or stop feedback at any time, even if he or she has previously approved it—without having to give any explanations.

6. Try to limit feedback to reflecting on what you saw or felt, rather than providing advice or analysis. Avoid intellectualizing about your personal experiences.
7. Compassion is welcome, but remember—our feelings are our feelings. We don't need to be persuaded out of them.
8. If you have a problem with something said during someone else's time, use your own time to discuss it, or wait until after the meeting.
9. Try to avoid sarcasm or other types of aggressive or negative comments during the meeting.

Gentleness Notes

When the work gets really deep on the First Step and the Fourth and Fifth Steps, it will be tempting to think of excuses not to go to a meeting. That is when it is most important for the group to be supportive and encouraging. Connecting on the phone during the week in a buddy system helps keep everyone working together.

Build gentleness into your group process. Allow for breaks from the work and rewards for completing each Step.

Suggested Readings

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Sheperd, Scott. *Survival Handbook for the Newly Recovering*. Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers, 1988.

Twelve Step Support Group Information

The following is a partial list of Twelve Step groups.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10017
(212) 870-3400

Co-Dependents Anonymous

P.O. Box 33577
Phoenix, AZ 85067-3577
(602) 277-7991

Co-Sex Addicts (Co-SA)

Twin Cities Co-S.A.
P.O. Box 14537
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 537-6904

Debtors Anonymous National Organization

P.O. Box 20322
New York, NY 10025-9992

Gamblers Anonymous

National Service Office
P.O. Box 17173
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 386-8789

Nar-Anon

P.O. Box 2562
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274
(310) 547-5800

Narcotics Anonymous

World Service Office
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
(818) 773-9999

Overeaters Anonymous

6075 Zenith Court
Rio Rancho, NM 87174
(505) 891-2664

Recovering Couples Anonymous (RCA)

P.O. Box 11872
St. Louis, MO 63105
(314) 830-2600

Sexaholics Anonymous (SA)

International Central Office
P.O. Box 300
Simi Valley, CA 93062
(818) 704-9854

P.O. Box 1542
New York, NY 10185
(212) 570-7292

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA)

P.O. Box 1964
Boston, MA 02105
(617) 625-7961

Sexual Addicts Anonymous (SAA)

P.O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270
(713) 869-4902

Sexual Compulsives Anonymous (SCA)

West Coast
P.O. Box 4470
170 Sunset Blvd., #520
Los Angeles, CA 90027
(310) 859-5585

East Coast

P.O. Box 1585
Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10011
(212) 439-1123

Workshops and Seminars with Dr. Patrick Carnes

Patrick Carnes often teaches weekend retreats based on *The Gentle Path*. These are powerful experiences designed in the spirit of gentleness and care that characterizes the book. They focus on using the Steps as a way to live life more effectively and to resolve issues with family and self. For information on Gentle Path Retreats, please call 1-800-708-1796.

If you wish to receive Dr. Carnes' speaking schedule on sexual dependency, trauma recovery, or family issues, please call 1-800-MEADOWS.

Excerpt from
Out of the Shadows:
Understanding Sexual Addiction

By Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.

There was not only the juggling act of keeping his relationships straight. Some of these women were vital to him professionally. He exploited relationships to receive cooperation. His problem was that the women would believe that he cared for them. The professional complications were extreme. One time, he was involved with a colleague and her secretary at the same time. The secretary went in to talk to her boss about this "problem" she had. Del had to face two very angry women.

His other behaviors were also problems. In porno shops, he was sexual with a number of men in the movie booths. Worse, the shops he frequented were near the capitol where he was liable to be recognized. He vowed to stop when, sitting in a meeting in the attorney general's office, a plan was described for a raid on a local porno shop—the one he had patronized two days before. But he did not stop.

Late one evening, Del pulled up next to a young woman at a stoplight. He had always had the fantasy of picking up a woman on a street. He looked at her and she smiled at him. Del became very excited. They drove side by side for several blocks. She returned his stares at each stop sign. Soon she pulled ahead of him, turned off the road, and pulled to a stop. He followed and pulled up behind her. She waved towards him and pulled out again. Del thought she wanted him to follow.

Del's mind raced ahead to where she could be leading him. She drove in the direction of a well-known local restaurant with a popular late night bar. Convinced that was where they headed, he speculated that after a drink, they might end up at her apartment. His mind filled with fantasies, he pulled up behind her when she stopped. As he was opening his door, she leaped out of her car and dashed into the building. Surprised, he looked up to see that he was not in front of the restaurant. Rather, she had stopped at the police station three blocks away.

Horried, Del got back in his car and raced home. While driving, he was in shock at how out of touch with reality he was. She had not

been encouraging him to follow her, but was in fact frightened. He, on the other hand, was so caught up in his fantasy, he failed to notice that she was parking at a police station.

He felt a flood of remorse for subjecting the woman to a frightening ordeal. Also, he was terrified that she would accuse him of attempted rape and he would be arrested. When Del arrived home at 1:30 a.m., he was so scared that he sat and prayed. At 2:00, there was a sound of a siren in the distance. He promised God that he would change. He fantasized about what it would do to his wife and kids. Truly, it was the most desperate moment of his life. Finally, he went to bed.

When he awoke in the morning, he felt tremendous relief. He knew he was not to be picked up. He went to work and put enormous energy into his job that day. At the end of the day, he felt the need of a reward. He stopped at a massage parlor.

Excerpt from *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, by Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.

More titles of interest . . .

Keep It Simple

Daily Meditations for Twelve-Step Beginnings & Renewal

Life can be complicated and hectic, but when we keep things simple, we can bring them down to a manageable size. These meditations focus on key Twelve Step principles, stressing the importance of putting into practice new beliefs, slogans, and fellowship. 400 pp.

Order No. 5066

The Twelve Step Prayer Book

A Collection of Favorite 12 Step Prayers and Inspirational Readings

written and compiled by Bill Pittman

If we're just beginning a life of recovery, or if we've been in the program for awhile, this collection of Twelve Step prayers provides us with inspirational readings that can enhance our spiritual growth. For those of us who have trouble finding the "right words" to speak with our Higher Power, these prayers may help us express our feelings. 111 pp.

Order No. 6236

The Presence at the Center

The Twelve Steps and the Journey Deep Within

In this book we take a compelling journey into the author's psyche as he shares an intensely honest examination of his own addictive behavior. As he meditates on the Twelve Steps, he describes the spiritual transformation that caused them to become the driving force in his life. 76 pp.

Order No. 1406

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